

L E T T E R S

TO THE

PEERS OF SCOTLAND.

BY THE

EARL OF LAUDERDALE,

D U B L I N :

Printed by William Porter,

FOR P. BYRNE, J. MOORE, AND G. FOLINGSBY.

1795.

5 INC 70 3 2003

5 INC 70 3 2003

5 INC 70 3 2003

INTRODUCTION.

THREE is no subject which has more exercised the ingenuity of those who have thus intruded on the public, than the framing of what might appear an adequate apology for the presumption it exhibits.

I am perfectly conscious that ambition of applause is the motive to which such an attempt will be generally attributed, and that in the mind of most, its failure, as in similar cases, will be attended with a degree of contempt proportionable to the supposed exorbitance of the expectation of the man who presumes to address them ; and I can assure you, that my experience of the extent of the goodnature and indulgence of men on these subjects, and the little practice I have had of arranging or stating my thoughts in writ-

ing, would have prevented me from addressing these letters to you, and still more, from subjecting them to the public eye, at any other period than in times such as those in which we live.

But whilst the industry with which calumnies have been circulated, renders, in my apprehension, an explanation of my motives to you necessary; an attempt by a plain and simple statement to bring back to the recollection of the nation the various steps by which folly, art, and mismanagement have combined to mislead the public mind, and to sink the country into its present state of calamity, cannot be disadvantageous to them: and if it exhibits in its imperfections a proof of my want of ability, I shall in my own mind feel ample compensation, if it produces in yours the conviction that I am ready to hazard any thing rather than that my public conduct should not stand fairly in your estimation.

The impression which fine words make is one thing, and the conviction of reason another;

ther ; I have no habits of composition, and if I had, I have not vanity sufficient to suppose that I could mislead you into an approbation of that which appeared to myself culpable. But, convinced of the rectitude of my conduct, it is not by art I wish to court your approbation, but by reason to command it; and in attempting to effect this, I look forward with confidence, that the strength of the case, brought under view at a moment when prejudice has in some degree subsided, will sink in your minds the imperfections of the statement.

In relying on the nature of the times as an apology for my intrusion, I mean not to allude to any of those misfortunes, so often dwelt upon, which are the universal attendants of warfare ; nor to those themes of complaint which, though often true, have been generally maliciously regarded as the report of disappointed politicians. The scenes of unparalleled disasters, that have followed one another with unprecedented rapidity, appropriate in the minds of all, characteristic calamities to the times ; and there are

none who have attended to the periodical publications of the day, who must not have observed, that a system of scandalous insinuation and disgraceful calumny has been carried on by men supposed to be under the influence of Government, and who have undoubtedly by them been screened from the justice of their country *, as novel in itself,

as

* The following libel, amongst many others, appeared about a year ago, in a paper called The True Briton.

“ How silently the rogues of London have passed over the
 “ swindling and fraudulent tricks of the conventional rogues
 “ of Paris ! They have not applauded the measures of con-
 “ fiscating the property of strangers in the public funds in
 “ France, and they dare not condemn it. In the one case
 “ they would be hooted at, and spurned by every honest man
 “ in the kingdom ; and in the second, they would lose their
 “ salaries ; and which by the by they are likely to do very
 “ soon ; for Danton has publicly declared that no confidence
 “ is to be placed in the English at Paris, who call themselves
 “ the victims of the British Government ; and that they
 “ ought all to be imprisoned. Lord Kenyon appears to be
 “ of the same opinion in some cases that have come before
 “ him ; and the Traitors, who would have sacrificed their
 “ country to France, are now very properly punished by be-
 “ ing renounced by both. O ye Priestleys ! Ye Frosts !
 “ Ye Stones ! Ye Paines ! Ye Sir Robert Smiths ! and ye,
 “ Launderdales ! What say you to this opinion of Danton,
 “ and the loss of your property ?—You have neither character
 “ nor

as it is disgraceful to the age. If therefore a sense of the first, which is now pretty generally felt, can vindicate in your minds the attempt I am about to make, I should flatter myself that none can abstain from sympathizing with the desire I feel, by fair and

" nor consideration in France or England:—despised in the
" latter, and spurned by the former, where will ye seek re-
" fuge?"

Upon applying to the Attorney General for proof of the publication, I was by him with great civility and attention informed, that he had no authority over the officers employed to purchase the newspapers; he referred me however to the Treasury, and stated, with that certainty which his idea of justice and propriety suggested, his conviction that I would there get that which on a similar application had been granted to others. But after a long evasive correspondence with the Secretary of the Treasury, though he acknowledged its having been granted in several cases, some of which he named, I found I could not even learn from him the mode in which my application should be made.

In this dilemma I wrote to Mr. Pitt himself, and, by his directions, laid my request before the Board in the shape of a Memorial, which was by them immediately negatived.—The whole correspondence is now in my possession.

I perfectly well know the assiduity with which the report has been circulated, of my possessing property in France, and even encouraged by those who I believe must have been as much convinced of the falsehood of it as myself.

plain

plain explanation, of doing away the effect which may have been unjustly produced by the last.

Various are the modes to which the art and ambition of Ministers have resorted, as means of obtaining or retaining their situations. But it was reserved for this Administration to endeavour to secure their ill-got power, by coupling the existence of the government of the country with their own existence in office ; to treat, with unparalleled presumption, opposition to them, even if conducted by means formerly practised by themselves*, as rebellion against the state ; to hold out the continuance of their measures as the only security for the government of the country, and the moment of their downfall as the sure æra of a revolution. To establish this belief through the medium of their own superior merit or management,

* See the Preamble to the Duke of Richmond's Bill, and his Letter to Lieutenant Colonel Sharman ; the Resolutions at the Thatched House Tavern, where Mr. Pitt was present ; and his Speeches on Reform,

has

has long appeared, even to themselves, impracticable;—but they have stooped, by calumny and insinuation, to endeavour to create a misrepresentation of the motives of others, and thus have looked to the diffidence which, by art, they could create in the minds of the public, of the principles of their opponents, as the source of that security which the knowledge of their own merits made them despair of acquiring, by attempting to establish a confidence in themselves.

(It is to do away any impression which their industry in this pursuit may have made, that, in the following letters, I wish to disclose to you the real motives that have actuated a man who, on the subject of the present war, has been a uniform opposer of their measures; to unveil to you the disguised motives of those who have contributed to involve the nation in it; and to exhibit to you that series of unsystematic mismanagement, which, as it will account for the calamities that are past, will teach you what you have to expect in future.)

By

By these means I hope, if it has been anywhere successfully established, to dislodge the prejudice, that there is any thing in common betwixt the power and the measures of those who now manage the affairs of the country, and the existence of our happy Constitution.

The attempt is that which ought to be as grateful to the Sovereign as to his People; for if the love of the Constitution, universally prevalent, makes the public voice anxiously express its desire of perpetuating the blessings which from it they derive, the Sovereign and his Family have under it too deep a stake, I trust in God too permanent a one, to wish to see its existence coupled, even in idea, with that of any administration; far less with that of an administration who by their measures have brought themselves into such a situation, that they can neither advance without ruin, nor retreat without disgrace.

LETTERS, &c.

LETTER I.

AS the numerous publications that have at various periods appeared, on the origin and progress of the French Revolution, are admitted by all to have contributed much to the amusement and information of the public; so it must also be acknowledged, that this important subject has been generally treated with a degree of talent that has justly created a well-founded opinion of the capacity, and an admiration of the ingenuity, of those who have in this country entered at large into the consideration of it. No man can entertain a higher respect than

I do

I do for the uncommon display of abilities that has been exhibited on this occasion; I should indeed conceive any wish to detract from their merit as a mark of my own want of taste and judgment. I must however acknowledge, that I cannot reflect on the manner in which it has been discussed, or the point of view in which it has almost been universally held out to our attention, without losing in a considerable degree the pleasure I derived from perusing them.

It might reasonably have been supposed that a great and sudden convulsion in a neighbouring kingdom would, in the first instance, have led to an investigation of the consequences it was likely to produce to our own country, and to the consideration of the line of conduct which it was prudent and proper for us to pursue; and it would have perhaps been fortunate, if, instead of launching into the wide sea of its universal operation, they had limited themselves to the narrow view of its effects in our national security; if, instead of investigating its connection

tion with the general interests of man, and the state of happiness or misery it was likely to diffuse over the world, the writers of this country had confined themselves more immediately to its connection with the interests of Englishmen, and the prosperity of this nation. The subject, even in this point of view, seemed to furnish ample ground for speculation. The destruction of a government whose monarchs and statesmen had so often disturbed the tranquillity of this country, and sacrificed the peace of Europe to that restless spirit of ambition and political intrigue, with which experience had taught us that they had for upwards of a century been uniformly animated, was in itself deeply interesting, and the consequences of it to us could not fail to appear to all sufficiently important.

But, dazzled with the greatness of the scene, and the magnitude of the questions agitated in the exalted imaginations of those who have treated on the subject, the narrow views of national interest and national security

rity have been eclipsed. Every question relative to the organization of the internal government of France has been considered as intimately connected with the general interests of mankind, and the immediate happiness of the universe. Lost to the recollection of all national feeling, or perhaps looking with contempt on the possession of it,—as citizens of the world, they have stepped forward to the contest; with all the prejudices of citizens of France they have generally terminated in conducting it.

An admirer however of that wisdom which distinguished the conduct of M. de Vergennes, who, at the commencement of our contest with America, anxiously courted the attention of the learned and ingenuous of his country, to the investigation of the consequences that were likely to result to France and Spain from the struggle; and left us to discuss amongst ourselves the abstract questions concerning the due limits of that filial affection which might be expected from a colony, or the extent of that right of taxation

tion for which we contended ;—it will be my object in this letter, alone to draw your attention to the Revolution of France, as it has affected the political situation of this country.

A uniform opponent of that system of conduct which has been adopted, I shall, by pursuing this inquiry, have an opportunity of displaying to you the real grounds on which I have acted—of subjecting to your view the motives which, in the discussion of the important questions that have presented themselves for decision, have regulated my conduct—and I shall have thus the satisfaction of thinking, that, if I should unfortunately meet with your disapprobation, that disapprobation will arise from a fair difference of opinion, and not from any prejudice created by those libellous insinuations, with which it is the fashion of the day to assail those who wish to build their opinions upon the sound foundation of reason uninfluenced by temporary alarms, or who have not yet learned to make their public conduct uniformly

formly subservient to their private views of interest.

The Revolution in France, whilst no one yet seemed alive to the idea that the immediate interests of this country would be affected by it, had attracted the attention of all:—by the discerning in France it had long, from the situation of that country, been foreseen; but in this—where we were not likely to derive any information from the intercourse of our Government with its Court, who were interested to conceal the situation; nor from our travellers, who in general associated with the Clergy and Nobility, a class of men that appear to have remained blind to their situation to the last—it came upon us by surprise: and if the event itself was unexpected, the mode in which it was conducted was no less so. The energy and vigour displayed in the proceedings of the States General, the resolution and firmness which distinguished their measures, contrasted with that levity and frivolity which the nation had formerly exhibited,

bited, and which we had long conceived to be the chief feature in their character, whilst it augmented the surprise, naturally added to the interest which was universally felt in the struggle; and there existed none who did not see with astonishment—many who viewed with admiration—the great and animated exertions of a people contending for what all, of necessity, regarded as the object of the greatest importance that could occupy the mind of man.

Whilst it thus gratified by its novelty, and interested the speculations of those who had made the mind of man, the progress of society, and the nature of government, the subject of abstract investigation—it afforded to the politician, who considered only the situation of this country, matter of joy and exultation. The extinction of a government, whose restless spirit of intrigue, whose continued love of warfare, whatever might be the character of the monarch on the throne, or the statesmen that surrounded him, promised to the nations of Europe the enjoyment

enjoyment of more peace and tranquillity than they had hitherto possessed; to us, in particular, the benefits that seemed likely to attend it were great. We daily felt the advantages of the increase of our capital, arising from that transfer of moveable property which always has, and which always will take place, from a country in a state of revolution, to that country the tranquillity of whose government seems to afford the greatest prospect of security. In the circumstances which attended the internal arrangements in which France was engaged, we saw what we thought constituted the impossibility of any attack being made on her part for years: in anticipating the peace and tranquillity we were likely thus to enjoy, we began to perceive the rapid diminution of that national debt with which we were loaded, and which forms the only check upon the enterprising spirit of the nation: in anticipating that which the other nations of Europe were likely to enjoy, we saw the extension of our commerce by the increased demand of our manufactures, upon which

we

we knew our wealth, our prosperity, and our importance as a nation, ultimately to depend.

Our hopes of security rested not alone upon the destruction of the old government of France; the hatred and detestation in which all the principles that had actuated it were held by those who seemed to succeed to the management of the government of that country, afford us well-grounded hopes that innovations would not be confined to arrangements in her interior government; it in a degree confirmed the reasonable expectation, which we formed, of seeing a change in that system which she had long pursued in her intercourse with foreign nations, not less beneficial to herself, than it was likely to be to the rest of Europe.

The language too which upon all occasions she used, the sentiments which at first distinguished all her public acts, as they spoke an aversion to hostilities, a desire of cultivating the arts of peace, tended not a

little to establish that opinion of the advantage to be derived from the change, which general reasoning had taught us to think we were likely to enjoy.

Such were the happy prospects entertained by almost all;—by those who judged from the documents that were in the hands of every one—by those whose situation might be supposed to give them access to preferable sources of information—by the philosopher, who, in his closet, viewed with pleasure the advantages which mankind were likely to derive from the existence of a free government, over a people who had long laboured under the pressure of laws and regulations, with which the vicious ambition, the folly and the ignorance of its old government had loaded it—as well as by the practical politician, who, in the senate, announced with eagerness the advantages which we as a nation were likely to derive from the change; and whilst in the pulpit we heard it employ the eloquence of Dr. Price, in the House of Commons it commanded

manded the exertions of Mr. Pitt, who, alluding to it in his memorable speech on the finances of the country, in February 1792, declared, "That unquestionably there never was a time when, from the situation of Europe, we might more reasonably expect fifteen years of peace than we may at the present moment."

With what astonishment will he, who at a future period reads the history of the day, see, within a few pages, all these prospects of peace and security vanish before his eye! — With what astonishment must every one retrace in his recollection, that though it is little more than two years since the declaration was made, this country has been engaged, for near a year and a half, in one of the most expensive and disastrous wars of which our history affords us any recollection—has been with industry employed, by remonstrances, intrigues and subsidies, in endeavouring to engage every European power in the conflict—and in pursuing a system that none ever held out more strongly.

ly as destructive to our interests, than those who have been the promoters and conductors of it!

That it has been entered into with the approbation of the public, is a thing which cannot be disputed; but it ought always to be recollected, that as national character is moulded and framed from the form of the government under which we live—as the pensiveness or levity which distinguishes individuals, the nature of the investigations in which they are led to occupy their minds, the characteristics of the results which they are induced to form, depend much on the government and institutions under which they live—so it is in the power of all governments to communicate temporary impressions, and in general for a time to guide the minds of the people over whom they preside;—and perhaps there has been no period when more pains were taken, by alarms, by misrepresentation and defamation, to affect the public mind, and reconcile it to the system which has been pursued.

Taught

Taught to value the blessings of peace, by the experience of the benefit during these last ten years we have derived from it, by the unparalleled situation and prosperity we had attained; still alive to the recollection of the calamities which had attended a perseverance in the American war, and the ruin in which by it we had well nigh been involved; having imbibed pretty generally, from the speculations of the enlightened age in which we live, an opinion that hardly any success, or the attainment of any object we could imagine to ourselves, could compensate to us as a nation for the certain calamities of war; viewing, in the interruption of our commerce, in the expence in which we inevitably must be involved, certain and sure misfortunes which no acquisition of foreign territory could counterbalance or repay; it was no light and trivial reason, it was no moderate fermentation of opinion, that could have insured a patient hearing for any one who proposed to involve us in hostilities; and nothing short of the hope of being able to convince the nation that it was

necessary

necessary for its existence, seemed to afford any prospect of its being universally relished

To produce these effects no exertion was neglected, by every insinuation and management. The belief was impressed on our minds, that the balance of power in Europe, for which we had so often contended, was destroyed ; that our allies, whom we were in honour and interest bound to defend, were about to be sacrificed to a degree of ambition, of the extent of which, even the recollection of Lewis the Fourteenth could furnish us with no idea ; and lastly, that that constitution under which we enjoyed happiness and prosperity, and which almost all equally agreed in admiring, was about to be undermined. The horrors committed by the French, whilst the pressure of external foes, and the real grounds from which they had originated, were kept out of sight, were anxiously brought forward to rouse the passions, and by prejudice to bar in our thoughts every idea of the possibility of treating. By our fears and our hopes we

Vulpius

were

were alternately assailed and flattered ; and the number of visionary republicans in this country, ready to co-operate in the destruction of our constitution, were represented to us as alone to be equalled by the number of imaginary royalists in France, who were ready to join us upon our first appearance in the field ; and whilst the consideration of the strength, of the great military skill and experience of the powers with whom we were about to co-operate, flattered us, on the Continent, with speedy and splendid success to be attained at no very immoderate expence, we were taught to look forward with avidity to the prospect of mercantile advantage, which the destruction of the naval power of France, and the possession of her colonies would afford.

Such were the opinions that industry and power combined successfully to propagate ; and it became the creed of all, that as war was the sure means of extending our consequence and importance abroad, so at home it was the only one of securing peace and tranquillity,

tranquillity, and of preserving that constitution which we had all such an interest in maintaining; in the preservation of peace, in the idea of obtaining redress or security by treaty, were every where discovered the seeds of external calamity, and of internal convulsion.—To doubt, to hesitate, far more to advance an opinion to the contrary, was to subject yourself to the charge, and even in the ideas of many to furnish proof complete, of connections with the enemies of the country abroad, and with secret fermenters of sedition at home.

Time and experience have now, in a degree, dispelled all those confused conceptions of imaginary success, which so universally floated in the minds of the people of this country;—the events on the Continent; the enormity of the expence already with certainty anticipated; the extent of the taxes which must be laid on; the consideration of the loss of property and restraint of liberty, which accumulation of taxes always produces, have roused pretty generally doubts of the expediency of war; but in the mouths
of

of almost all, if not in their minds, peace is still stigmatized as likely to be productive of every possible evil ; and the real calamities which we see and feel from war, are dogmatically represented as likely to be exceeded by those which we imagine will attend, or which, perhaps as a sacrifice to our consistency, we obstinately attribute to peace.

Before this change took place, to have attempted any explanation of my motives, any vindication of my conduct, with hopes of success, would have been foolish and absurd ; nay, even now I am diffident whether the advocate for peace—he who sees in war no possible advantage, and every species of calamity ; he who from experience regards our perseverance in it as the sure method of nourishing and creating internal sedition and convulsion ; as the undoubted means of degrading us as a nation, and sinking our relative consequence amongst the powers of Europe—can flatter himself with meeting amongst the public many who will peruse with an impartial eye what he may be disposed.

posed to state; or who will not rest satisfied, when the nature of the attempt here dawns upon them, with anticipating the absurdity of his arguments, and prejudging the wickedness of his conclusion.

From you, however, whose partiality I have experienced, whose liberality of sentiment I know, I trust for favour, and flatter myself I indulge no ill-grounded expectation, in hoping that I shall be enabled to engage your attention to a short investigation into the nature of the Revolution in France, and a consideration of the effects which the line of conduct we have pursued, and are pursuing in consequence of it, has had upon this country; as well as to what probably would have been the consequence of our steadily endeavouring to persevere in that system of neutrality which we adopted on the first appearance of it, and that predilection for peace which at that time manifested itself in our conduct. In doing this it is my intention in this letter, to consider the nation as without party, and to view them

as if with unanimity they had adopted the one or the other line.

It has been in general the happiness of those who speculate upon, and still more of those who are called to conduct the affairs of a great nation, that events, however important and extraordinary in themselves, are seldom so completely isolated ; so wide of the usual range of speculation, or unlike any thing that the page of history records, as to deprive us in the investigations that lead to the forming of those opinions necessary for the regulation of our conduct, of that benefit which we acquire from the experience of others ; of that surest of all guidances which we derive from avoiding the errors, and adopting that which has proved itself by events to be the wisdom of those who have preceded us. There are, however, many things which distinguish the French Revolution ; perhaps some that form the most remarkable and important features of it, so novel in themselves, so unlike any thing with which the history of

man

man renders us familiar, as to force the politician, in measuring the steps that it is fit to pursue, to have recourse exclusively to general principles, without which, undoubtedly, the application of the skill of no one can be perfect, and which, aided by practical experience, is what alone enables him to come to sure and definite conclusions.

Many are the convulsions, numerous indeed are the revolutions, with which the annals of the world make us conversant ;—acts of personal oppression of individuals; the ambition of chiefs; the struggles of contending parties; the jealousies of the various orders in the community; the proud oppressions of elated monarchs, with all their consequences, have but too often extended their baneful influence over the different nations with which history has rendered us acquainted. We all recollect the events that followed the violated chastity of Lucretia; the judicial murder of a Horne and an Egmont, and the firm and noble resistance made to acts of extortion by a Hampden.

We

We cannot forget the generous struggles for liberty which distinguish the history of our own country, and the ultimate expulsion of its monarchs. But in vain shall we consult our memories, in vain shall we attempt in retracing history, to discover the features of a nation that had existed for centuries under a form of government, in which we had been taught to believe that it had long habitually prided itself; where, without any instance of immediate active oppression that drew forth resistance; without any act of tyranny on the part of the monarch; nay, with a general belief, even in his enemies, of his goodness; without any struggle amongst the different orders of the state; all seemed to agree in the necessity of such alterations as virtually amounted to *a dissolution of its existing government.* Yet he who looks at the situation of France, who reads with attention the numerous addresses of its parliaments, the accounts of the enthusiasm with which they were received by the people, who examines the propositions entertained by the Nobility in the Assembly
of

of the Notables, and the Address proposed by the Bishop of Blois, which was agreed to and presented by the Clergy, cannot abstain from admitting, that all orders of the community seemed to assent to this *proposition*. Nay, the schemes of innovation, to the extent of alteration of what had long been its practical constitution, successively brought forward by its Ministers, shewed a conviction, even on the part of those who managed the government, of the necessity of a change. The Assemblée des Notables of M. de Calonne, the Cours Plenier of M. M. de Brienne and Lamoignon, the calling together the States General by M. Neckar, were all successive proofs of the opinion of those ministers. And the Court, in the edict for assembling the States General, which gave to the Tiers Etats a number equal to the other two orders, seemed not only to pronounce the necessity of the extinction of the government that existed in practice, but to declare the inadequacy (to the situation of the times) of those checks and institutions, which existed in France at a former period.

There

There were few who considered its lingering existence, that did not foresee in the calling together the States General, the death warrant of the existing government of France, and who did not look to the period of their meeting, as substantially the moment of its dissolution. There was none who did not perceive, soon after they were assembled, that the practical government of the country, which had long existed, and under which the character of the nation had been formed, and the habits of individuals contracted, was annihilated; who did not view with astonishment the little resistance with which its dissolution was effected; who could regard in any other light, than as in a manner the operation of magic, the destruction of that Bastille which had been for ages the dread of France; the defection of that army, whose attachment to their monarch had been the theme of the world; and the assumption of the powers of government by a National Assembly, of the existence of which the history of their country furnishes not the most remote precedent.

New

New and extraordinary as this phænomenon may appear, unaccountable as at first sight it may seem, we may trace its origin to circumstances from whence it must have naturally proceeded, to causes however, which being themselves novel in their nature, never could exhibit their effects till the age in which we live.

The system of providing for the extraordinary expences of a government, by mortgaging the public revenues, is an invention of a modern date;—the treasures seized by Julius in Rome, during the civil wars; those possessed by the different Grecian republics; the immense sums amassed by the successors of Alexander, sufficiently shew the prudent practice of antiquity, in providing in the time of peace and tranquillity for those expences which might be necessary in the moment of public exigency,

From ancient history, we can therefore derive no experience of the consequences which attend carrying to excess that funding system.

system first introduced by some of the modern Italian states, and which in this century has been carried by our own, as well as other European nations, to so alarming an extent. In modern times, the consequences of it had been the subject of much ingenious speculation amongst the learned, but we possessed no practical experience that could make us acquainted with the extent of the evils with which it might be connected;—the rapid progress of commerce and manufactures, the increasing prosperity and accumulated wealth which attended them amongst the nations that carried this system the furthest, had enabled them, by a gradual increase of taxes, to palliate the mischiefs that seemed to flow from it, and in a degree to arrest the disorder in its progress. We had witnessed, indeed, many of the evils connected with its lighter symptoms, even on our own robust constitution; but the fatal effects of the more advanced stages of the disorder upon the weakly frame of the French government, presented a new scene to our view. The eyes of all had been long

D opened

opened to the fallacy of that fanciful sophistry, that saw in public incumbrances, the riches and the wealth of the people who contracted them, that viewed them as useful engines for promoting the commerce and prosperity of the nation in which they existed; but the extent of the evil, the ultimate consequences, which it was likely to produce, could be accurately limited or defined in the speculation of none. Even the experience of what had happened under one form of government, if it had existed, would have afforded no conclusion, that could have enabled us, with precision, to infer what might be the event in another. For if on the one hand it appeared clear that the system might be continued, and the load of debt augmented, as long as the ingenuity of the financier could render palatable, or, the government enforce the payment of those taxes which it made necessary; so, on the other, it was obvious that the extent of his skill must of necessity be regulated by the opulence or poverty of the community, over whose affairs he presided; and, that the power

power to enforce, must depend upon the nature of the institutions and government of that country in which the system was adopted.—“Our popular government,” says Mr. Hume, “perhaps will render it difficult or dangerous for a minister to venture on so desperate an expedient as that of a voluntary bankruptcy. And though the House of Lords be altogether composed of proprietors of land, and the House of Commons chiefly; and consequently neither of them can be supposed to have great property in the funds; yet, the connection of the members may be so great with the proprietors, as to render them more tenacious of public faith, than prudence, policy, or even justice, strictly speaking, requires; and perhaps too, our foreign enemies may be so politic as to discover that our safety lies in despair, and may not therefore shew the danger open and barefaced, till it be inevitable. The balance of power in Europe, our grand-fathers, our fathers, and we, have all deemed too unequal to be preserved

" without our attention and assistance :—but
 " our children, weary of the struggle, and
 " fettered with incumbrances, may sit down
 " secure, and see their neighbours oppressed
 " and conquered, till at last they themselves,
 " and their creditors, lie both at the mercy of
 " the conqueror ; and this, properly enough,
 " be denominated the violent death of our
 " public credit."

But in making this conjecture, Mr. Hume could alone have reference to a government in which the nature of its political institutions had led to the burthens being equally spread over all, and in which the resources had been, by that means, fairly exhausted. Had he contemplated a nation, where the financier was hampered with privileges, and hemmed in on all sides with absurd exemptions, whose government and political institutions were so weakened with the monopolies and privileges with which it was inseparably interwoven, as not to possess vigour and energy within itself to get rid of them, however conscious the whole com-

community avowed themselves of the necessity of it ; then he would probably have formed to himself a very different conclusion. He would have seen the government of such a country, not as likely to fall a prey to foreign enemies ; he would not have viewed it at the feet of a conqueror, but he would have described it as likely to fall a sacrifice to the belief of its incapacity which uniformly pervaded the community.

If in the evils attending this new system of providing for the wants of the state, we can trace the cause of this extraordinary event, our wonder and surprise at the facility and ease with which it was effected will also in a degree vanish ; when we consider the enormity of the evil under which France laboured, and which its government had mysteriously concealed till the annual extent of the defalcation of the revenue was so great, that the dread of the increasing difficulties which it foresaw, could on the one hand no longer permit it to palliate ; and on the other, in its cramped, weak,

and

and enervated state, it was equally unfit to meet the creditor with a refusal, or the public with a demand.

He whose habits of vice and dissipation have brought ruin upon himself, when reduced to distress, may take to the highway ; but in attempting to get forcibly the pittance with which he means to purchase his daily bread, a struggle will ensue : the merchant whose supposed opulence has secured an extensive credit, though he may have long known the situation of his affairs, though he may have foreseen that he was about to involve hundreds in ruin, when the hour of bankruptcy comes, disappears from the Exchange, and is permitted quietly to retreat.

The necessities of the court of Charles the First, to administer to its momentary expences, induced them to attempt forcibly the levying of illegal exactions ; history informs us of the struggle that ensued. The necessities of the court of Lewis the Sixteenth, occasioned by the embarrassment in a great

a great and complicated system of finance in which it was involved, when the hour of reckoning came, exhibited to mankind a striking proof that the Exchange is not the most important situation from whence, in the moment of similar calamity, a quiet and peaceable retreat may be made. Betwixt the affairs of individuals and national concerns, there is always some resemblance, some analogy, to be traced.

Though the causes are various to which you may attribute the scenes that immediately followed the dissolution of the old government;—though that love of liberty which instantly shone forth and discovered itself, and which seemed to guide at first all their proceedings, may be traced as arising from the general diffusion of knowledge which prevailed, from the habits of admiring the effects of freedom, which even the Court itself had endeavoured to excite, when in America, as in Holland, it protected the cause of democracy; and from writings on the subject, which, during that period,

period, had been not only permitted but encouraged ;—yet it is to the operation of the excess of this funding system on the vicious frame of the French Monarchy, which you may exclusively attribute the dissolution of the old government, and its perfect incapacity to proceed. For if we were for a moment to fancy that greater energy had been displayed in its defence, that the armed force which surrounded Paris had been brought to act, and that the Assembly had by their means been dismissed, there is no one who can think, that, when it had disgusted the people at large, perhaps embrued its hands in their blood, government would have possessed influence sufficient to extricate itself from difficulties which it antecedently had not courage to face.

There is no one can reasonably conjecture that this would have had any other effect than retarding the hour of the calamity, or perhaps accelerating those scenes of horror
which

which mankind have since had so much reason to regret.

France now exhibited a new scene to the eyes of mankind, the first great victim to the rash and improvident management of this modern system of Finance. We saw, not in an infant nation, but amongst a people, who, in spite of the drawback under which they had laboured from the nature of their government, had stood the foremost in civilization, and in the cultivation of the arts and sciences, every trace of its government destroyed. We saw all the political institutions of a nation palsied and annihilated, who are well described by a modern Philosopher, when he says, "The French
" are the only people, except the Greeks,
" who have been at once Philosophers,
" Poets, Orators, Historians, Painters, Ar-
" chitects, Sculptors, and Musicians. With
" regard to the Stage they had excelled even
" the Greeks, who far excelled the English;
" and in common life they have in a great
" measure perfected that Art, the most use-
" ful

" ful and agreeable of any, *l'Art de vivre,*
" the Art of Society and Conversation."

The busy scenes in which the people of France were of necessity about to be engaged, were but too likely to carry them on in the progress, naturally dictated by the situation in which the dissolution of the old government left them. But the speculation of what was likely to ensue did not alone concern them; it required not much foresight to discover how much it was interesting to the rest of the world—how much, in particular, it was interesting to us, who had long been accustomed to consider that country as a rival.

It was a subject that demanded the utmost attention, as it required the most enlarged talents in our statesmen.—It called for the exercise of those talents which qualify men for taking a lead in the uncommon and more important situations of society; there was here no precedent that could be called in, no official experience that could aid or assist; " for,

“ for, when the high roads are broken up
 “ and the waters out, when a new and trou-
 “ bled scene is opened, and the file affords
 “ no precedent; then it is that a greater
 “ knowledge of mankind is requisite than
 “ office ever gave, or than office ever can
 “ give.”

In pursuing this investigation, the path was not however barren; there were many things that tended to aid and assist the mind; —for though deprived of any experience of a nation, which directly or even remotely resembled in its situation that of France, the consideration of the manners, of the habits, and of the character of the different classes of individuals that formed the community, seemed to present to us grounds on which to build our speculations.

France, indeed, had lost its government; but the people of France had not, could not, shake off those different modifications of character which under it they had acquired. We still saw distinctly remaining the various classes

classes of the community to which the nature of the old institutions had given rise ; —we still saw existing in each the habits, the distinguishing characteristics, with which the vice or the weakness of the ancient government had stamped them.

We saw in the nobility and clergy that were used to surround the throne, a class of men corrupted and debased by the mode in which they had been educated ; by the manner in which they had lived ; whose fortunes had fallen a victim to the enormous extravagance encouraged by the Court, and who had been subsequently maintained in their luxurious habits by the corrupt profusion of it ; and in that description of those two orders, who, remote from the Court, lived in the different provinces, we beheld men practiced in the exercise of that little village-tyranny, which their superiority had authorized ; accustomed to enjoy those exemptions and privileges on which they habitually prided themselves, and which taught them

them to regard those beneath them as almost a different class of beings *.

We saw in those who composed the different Parliaments a proud magistracy, who, though their ambition and the necessities of the state had led them every where to oppose the fiscal oppressions of the Court, loved the consequence they enjoyed, and looked with satisfaction at that exclusive privilege of administering justice or injustice over his people which they had purchased from the Sovereign.

* In the *Cahiers* of the nobility, at the time of the States General, we find them steadily demanding, that all their feudal rights should be confirmed: that the carrying of arms should be strictly prohibited to every body, but noblemen: that the infamous arrangements of the militia should remain on its old footing: that breaking up parks, and inclosing commons, should be prohibited: that the nobility alone should be eligible to enter into the army, church, &c. that lettres de cachet should continue: that the press should not be free: and in fine, that there should be no free corn trade. Those of the clergy maintain that the liberty of the press ought rather to be restrained than extended: that the laws against it should be renewed and executed: that admission into religious orders should be, as formerly, at sixteen years of age: that lettres de cachet are useful, and even necessary. They solicit to prohibit all division of commons, and to revoke the edict allowing inclosures.

In

In the middling orders of society we saw many, who had acquired affluence by the commerce in which they had been engaged, averse to the old system, from the restraints which, by its improvident laws, they had laboured under in the conduct of their profession,—as well as from a recollection of the little personal estimation in which, under it, they were held.—In this class we also found the disciples of Voltaire, Rousseau, Mably, Turgot, and the economists, a set of men, the pupils of those who had enlightened the world with their speculations; amongst whom the principles of political economy had been long better understood, and more thoroughly digested, than they were in any other nation; who had by their various publications tinged the mind of the whole community with an idea of liberty which their habits rendered them incapable of digesting.

In the lower orders, which bore in numbers an infinitely greater proportion to the others than it happily does in this country where

where property is diffused, we saw human nature in an abject situation indeed ! a people devoid of all property, who looked alone to the labour of their hands for their daily support, and who were in many instances robbed of a great proportion of the pittance they could earn, that no encroachments might be made upon the exemptions and privileges of the other orders, in providing for the wants of the state, and the luxuriant corruption of its court ; a people rendered in their nature cruel, by the habitual want of feeling they had experienced on the part of their superiors ; and savage, from the oppression to which their minds had so long been trained *.

Such.

* Though I could give many instances of the misery of the lower orders in France from my own knowledge, and refer to eloquent passages in the works of the writers of that country, descriptive of the sad situation to which they were reduced, I choose to confine myself to the following extracts from the works of Mr. Arthur Young, which, as they were recommended by Mr. Reeves and his association, may be supposed to furnish that increased conviction the mind feels when it extracts a fact from an unwilling witness.

Country-

Such were the component parts of this great nation, who saw prostrate at their feet, from

Country-labour being 76 per cent. cheaper in France than in England, it may be inferred, that all those classes which depend on labour, and are the most numerous in society, are 76 per cent. less at their ease (if I may use the expression), worse fed, worse cloathed, and worse supported both in sickness and in health, than the same classes in England, notwithstanding the immense quantity of precious metals, and the imposing appearance of wealth in France.

Walking up a long hill to ease my mare, I was joined by a poor woman, who complained of the times, and that it was a sad country ; on my demanding her reasons, she said, her husband had but a morfel of land, one cow, and a poor little horse, yet he had a franchar (42lb.) of wheat, and three chickens, to pay as a quit-rent to one seigneur ; and four franchar of oats, one chicken, and 1 s. to pay to another, beside very heavy tailles and other taxes. She had seven children, and the cow's milk helped to make the soup. It was said at present, that *something was to be done by some great folks for such poor ones, but she did not know who or how ; but God send us better, car les tailles & les droits nous écrasent.* This woman at no great distance might have been taken for sixty or seventy, her figure was so bent, and her face so furrowed and hardened by labour ; but she said, she was only twenty-eight. An Englishman, who has not travelled, cannot imagine the figure made by infinitely the greater part of the country women in France ; it speaks, at first sight, hard and severe labour ; I am inclined to think, that they work harder than the men, and this, united with the more miserable labour of bringing a new race of slaves into

from the causes I have detailed, without any great or proportionable exertion of their own, all the laws and institutions under which they had lived.

What

into the world, destroys absolutely all symmetry of person, and every feminine appearance. To what are we to attribute this difference in the manners of the lower people in the two kingdoms ? *To Government.*

The murder of a Seigneur, or a chateau in flames, is recorded in every newspaper ; the rank of the person who suffers, attracts notice ; but where do we find the register of that Seigneur's oppression of his peasantry, and his exactations of feudal services, from those whose children were dying around them for want of bread ? Where do we find the minutes that assigned these starving wretches to some vile petty-fogger, to be fleeced by impositions, and a mockery of justice, in the seigneurial courts ? Who gives us the awards of the intendant and his *sub-delegues*, which took off the taxes of a man of fashion, and laid them with accumulated weight on the poor, who were so unfortunate as to be his neighbours ? Who has dwelt sufficiently upon explaining all the ramifications of despotism, regal, aristocratical, and ecclesiastical, pervading the whole mass of the people; reaching, like a circulating fluid, the most distant capillary tubes of poverty and wretchedness ? In these cases, the sufferers are too ignoble to be known, and the mass too indiscriminate to be pitied.

What are we to think of demanding, as a favour, the permission——“ *de nettoyer ses grains, de faucher les prés artificiels, & d'enlever ses chanvres sans égard pour la perdrix*

E

ou

What was to happen no one could accurately predict, it would have required the gift

ou tout autre gibier ?—An English reader will scarcely understand it, without being told, that there were numerous edicts for preserving the game, which prohibited weeding and hoeing, lest the young partridges should be disturbed; steeping seed, lest it should injure the game; manuring with night soil, lest the flavour of the partridges should be injured by feeding on the corn so produced; mowing hay, &c. before a certain time, so late as to spoil many crops; and taking away the stubble, which would deprive the birds of shelter.

BERRY.—*Argentan.*—They pay rent for a cottage 20 livres, get their fuel in the woods; their tailles 15 to 24 sous: as much for capitation, and do six days labour in the roads.

ST. GEORGE.—They eat buck-wheat made in very thin cakes without leaven.

PELLECOY.—Poor women picking weeds into their aprons to feed their cows with, and something like this I have remarked, more or less, all the way from Calais; it conveys an idea of poverty and want of employment.

FALAISE.—Live very badly, much of the bread is barley and buck-wheat, and many have nothing else but this and water, unless cyder happens to be very cheap; their fuel what wood they can steal.

MORLAIX to BREST.—The people of the country are all dressed in great trowsers like breeches, many of them with

gift of prophecy, and far exceeds the narrow bounds of the intellect of man. To have foreseen the establishment of the Constitution of 1789;—the Revolution that ensued in August 1792;—the attempt to establish a republic, and to conduct the government by means of the intellectual powers alternately operating on the passions and the reason of man;—the subsequent dominion of anarchy, the cruelties that attended it;—and the extent of the emigrations that during these different changes would take place, was impossible.

But an analysis of the elements of which this society was formed, might have convinced any one, that to the debased minds of many incapable of bearing the sad reverse of fortune, of viewing the scenes which

with naked legs, and most with wooden shoes; the women seemed from their persons and features to be harder worked than horses.

LYONS.—A room for a manufacturer 200 to 300 livres, and house rent of all sorts very dear; 20,000 people are now (1790) starving: yet charities of all sorts do not amount to less than a million of livres a year.

brought to their recollection their former power and splendour, emigration would naturally present itself as a resource;—that if a government was to be formed by the joint efforts of the nobility and clergy that remained, and the middling orders whom the scene had brought forward, it would naturally partake of a limited monarchy; that as the influence of name and nobility gradually disappeared, the efforts of the middling orders, from their aversion to any thing that approximated to the ancient system, as well as from the nature of the opinions which in theory they had been accustomed to hold, would make them relish, and induce their leaders to attempt the establishing a republic; and that, lastly, habituated to nothing but change, the passions and ambition of the lower orders, broke loose from all restraint, should produce something like that extraordinary scene of which we have all been witnesses.

The progress was natural, and, even if there had been no interference of external force,
it

it seemed to flow from the nature and character of those who were unfortunately concerned, and the situation in which they were left. To anticipate the scenes of horror, which of necessity must have ensued in this last stage of the business, was that from which most would naturally revolt, but there were none who forced themselves to it that could reasonably doubt of the extent to which they would arrive.—The uninformed man who never saw power exercised, but with a view to the benefit of him who possessed it;—when he acquires it, regards it naturally as the privilege to play the tyrant. The cruelties and oppressions of men broke loose from the chains of power, are always in proportion to the weight of the chains with which they have been loaded. A mob in London generally terminates with the breaking of a few windows, or at most, with the destruction of a few houses. An insurrection amongst the negroes in the West Indies ends in the murder of the slave-drivers, too often in that of the planter's whole family.

We

We ought not, we cannot justly, ascribe to the new system those scenes which have so often disgusted us; to contemplate it is a task shocking to humanity; but constrained to it, the discerning eye discovers alone the natural consequences of the vicious absurdity of the old system. Its enormities afford a standard by which you may accurately commensurate the sad extent of the oppression over the poor, which under the ancient monarchy of France was exercised.

It is this reasoning, it is this analysis of the causes of the French Revolution, and of the horrors it has occasioned. It is the reflection, that there existed in our finance the utmost prosperity, and with good management no chance of their getting into that state of disorder which produced the Revolution in France, that has always convinced me that there could be no natural tendency to a similar situation in this country.

It

It is the conviction, that at all events the scenes of that unrelenting love of blood that attended it, which seemed to be the legitimate offspring of its government, of those racks and Bastiles that it looked to, to support its power, never could be generated under the influence of the mild spirit of our Laws, and the wise regulation of our Constitution, which quieted all alarms in my mind upon that subject.

It is this mode of considering the subject, however, that has long convinced me of the progressive tendency that things had in France to the situation in which they now are; and that would have led me—if I had thought that we could ever have a right to interfere in the internal regulations of another government, if I could have lost sight of that right which exists in every community to form laws and institutions for its interior regulation, that principle upon which the independence of nations rests—if ever I could have foreseen the moment when views of expediency would have sanctioned the interference

terference of this country for such a purpose, —to applaud the wisdom of those who wished to call us into the field at an early period, to criticise the folly of those who put off interfering, till the moment in which this country took a part. To destroy it at its birth might have been, perhaps, an easy, if a desirable task; we know what it is to cope with it when its giant strength has reached to maturity.

But the system which this country wisely at first pursued, permitted it not to think that it could have a right, that the time could ever arrive when it would be expedient, to interfere.

In the most authentic and solemn mode in which the opinions of those who conducted the government could be declared, in his Majesty's speeches from the Throne, we had the happiness to see the right of interference disclaimed; the expediency of it reprobated; the prospect of our continuing in peace held out with satisfaction; and the hope of
the

the general peace of Europe, wisely stated to us as a commercial nation, as if it deeply concerned our interests. In its increasing riches the country felt the benefit of this conduct ; in the happiness which they enjoyed, the people felt the blessings of it ; in the tendency which it had to preserve in the minds of foreign powers that idea of consequence we had acquired by our struggle against so many nations during the latter period of the American war, mankind saw the policy of it ; the nation universally marked it with their approbation, and they were apparently as unanimous for maintaining it as ever they have been for the war—in reality much more so.

That system has been however abandoned; and, at a late period, we have been plunged into a war, the object of which, as the fermentation of the public opinion seemed likely to sympathize with it, has successively been stated :—first, to be the security of Holland, the maintenance of treaties relative to the navigation of the Scheldt, and
the

the repeal of the decree of the 19th November;—next, compensation for the past, and security for the future; and lastly, the destruction of that system of government or anarchy that prevails in France: and this is now held out as necessary even to insure our existence as a people.

Had we continued to confine ourselves to any of the two first objects, I should have here thought it necessary, before calling your attention to the probable consequences which would have resulted from persevering in that system in which we first embarked, or from adopting that system which we are now pursuing, to have stated to you some ideas concerning the origin of the war. The first blow sufficiently denotes the first act of aggression; but it by no means points out who, in the spirit of the law of nations, is the aggressor. When I consider, however, that we have now embarked for the avowed purpose of *saving ourselves*, by destroying the prevalent system in France; when I learn from that consideration, that as self-preservation

vation necessarily calls forth activity, war must at all events have inevitably been resolved upon in the breasts of those who could entertain this idea; and that we should of course have been now in the same situation whatever line of conduct France had pursued, unless she had given up that system of interior management which it is our object to destroy, I should think I was engaging you in an irrelevant and unprofitable enquiry.

In stating to you the advantages that would have attended our having remained at peace, I shall be cautious to say nothing that reason does not authorize; I will not give scope to my imagination; I feel the strength of my argument too much to think it requires it; I should weaken it in my own estimation by risking the chance of raising suspicions in your minds were I to indulge it. And I cannot but feel, that it would be unfair to arraign the judgment of those who have brought on the war, by supposing that it was practicable for them to foresee the unfortunate

unfortunate events that have ensued, or the enormous expence into which we have been led. I will do them the justice to say, that I do not believe there exist many individuals, who, if they could have foreseen all that has happened, and viewed the prospects which we now possess, would have given way either to views of interest or feelings of alarm, to such a degree as to prevent their supporting the motion of Mr. Fox on the 18th December, 1792, which might have happily secured to the country a chance of accommodating the then subsisting differences.

At the time we embarked in the war, we had experience of the advantages which our trade and commerce had derived from peace, and of the national prosperity that had ensued from our perseverance in it. And if the impoverished state of the people of those countries, who had antecedently engaged in hostilities, had diminished in certain instances the demand for our manufactures in some of those markets to which they used to be carried,

carried, whilst it exhibited to our eyes a picture of the consequences attending war, from which we might have benefited, the estimation in which we were held afforded a reasonable prospect of our being able, by mediation, to check the evil if it became important; and by restoring peace to Europe, to stop the growth of that habit of the love of military glory and enterprise, which was entwined with the existence of the monarchy of France, though under the new system it had not as yet had time thoroughly to take root. If unfortunately we had not succeeded in immediately restoring general peace, we had at all events the advantage, from the neglect which had pervaded the commerce of other countries, in consequence of the confusion in which they were involved, of, in a manner, monopolizing the trade of Europe. If the sale of some of our manufactures was likely to be reduced, it was probable that in others it would be much augmented;—the demand for the pottery of Staffordshire might have been diminished; but the looms of Yorkshire and Lancashire,

and

and the furnaces of Birmingham, were, from the situation of Europe, sure of increased employment; and the receipts of the country, on the whole, were likely to be much extended.—If hostilities were persevered in by the other powers of Europe, we had the prospect of at least enjoying that satisfaction which would arise from seeing our riches and our resources increasing, and our debts diminishing; whilst those of our rival were lavished in unproductive expenditure, and her people losing the habits of productive labour. The nature of the warfare in which France was engaged, as it involved her in great expence, and furnished no employment for her navy, held out no ill-grounded hope of a general neglect in her marine department; and the extinction of her commerce annihilating in a degree the nursery for her seamen, taught us to flatter ourselves, that by persevering in peace we should see our only rival on the sea gradually lose the means and the habit of displaying her strength on that element, and offered to us at once the pleasing and the proud prospect of being able
to

to maintain the dominion of the ocean with increased certainty and diminished expence.

When the hour of general peace arrived, we had, by pursuing this line, the happiness to foresee that the increase of our capital, the diminution of our debt, and consequently of our taxes—the habits of industry which we must have acquired, the improvement in machinery, which time, ingenuity, and enterprise insure, would have enabled us to maintain our commercial superiority, and to meet in every market in the world our old rival, even though from the diminution and equalization of her taxes, from the additional energy of her new government, and from the enjoyment of liberty ever propitious to commerce, she should start with advantages the effects of which we had not heretofore experienced.—And by thus increasing our industry and opulence, by extending our commerce, we were led with certainty to anticipate its effects in raising our importance abroad, whilst, by the wealth and happiness enjoyed at home, it was equally certain fun-

damentally to establish the love of our constitution in the heart of every man. For “ Perish our commerce, let our constitution “ survive *!” involves a paradox that it would be treating your understandings with contempt to investigate.

If, in contemplating our prospects in remaining at peace, this pleasing picture presented itself to our eye; in viewing the probable events and consequences of warfare, we saw all those calamities which usually attend that situation, and which to us, who depend so much on our manufactures and our commerce, is more dreadful than it can be to any other nation.

We had a sure and certain prospect of the increase of our national debt, which had been augmented during the American war to a sum that at the moment seemed to threaten us with destruction—to a sum which threw ridicule on the limited ideas of those who

* A sentiment advanced by authority in the House of Commons.

had

had antecedently speculated on the subject*, and taught man to doubt whether the world was not as yet too much in its infancy to furnish materials, on which to build our reasoning on matters of political economy.— We had indeed been enabled, by the increase of opulence which we derived from the industry and ingenuity of our manufacturers, as well as from the aid and assistance to labour, and the variety of its effects, which the ingenious application of mechanism and chemistry in the conduct of our manufactures had fortunately for this country produced, to discharge during peace the interest of our enormous debt; and even to make provision for the reduction of it.—But all were convinced of the disadvantage under which we laboured, in having so large a part of our wealth employed in unproductive uses; and there were none who did not look forward with alarm, who did not dread the consequences of thus burying any larger proportion of our productive capital.

* Hume's Essay on Public Credit, Note annexed to it.

We could not but foresee the temporary diminution of our trade, from the natural tendency that war has, both abroad and at home, to diminish the demand for our manufactures; and the disadvantage that would arise from diverting the hands and the habits of so many of our industrious manufacturers from productive to unproductive labour, could not for a moment escape our observation.

But before we became enamoured of, and ultimately resolved upon, this system, the circumstances of the times, the situation of the nation with which we were going to contest, led naturally to anticipate in the present warfare, the hour of more than usual calamity.

We saw that we were about to engage in an unequal contest. Ours was a government that, in estimating its resources, could not totally lose sight of the happiness and prosperity of the people over which it ruled.— Theirs was a government that found resour-

ces

ces in robbery and murder, whose means of expenditure were alone to be estimated by the extent of the property of the nation, and the number of whose warriors could alone be limited in our imaginations by the number of which the community consisted.

Our military experience, and that of our allies, the circumstance of almost all those having retired from France who possessed experience in the art of war, gave us indeed a reasonable ground to expect a temporary success. But whilst reason, general principle and experience, taught us to ridicule the idea that courage belonged peculiarly to any nation, or was exclusively the effect of any particular climate;—it was difficult to see why superiority of capital, and the extended application of labour arising from the number of hands they could command, should not in war, as in other trades, ensure success*.

When

* The following extract of a letter from the Duke of York, published in the Gazette since this was written, seems strongly to confirm this opinion:

When we viewed the assertion made on plausible and good grounds, in Sir James Stuart's Political Oeconomy, how much reason had we to be alarmed!

“ Were any prince in Europe, whose subjects I shall suppose may amount to six millions of inhabitants, one half employed in agriculture, the other half employed in trade and industry, or living upon a revenue already acquired; were such a prince, I say, supposed to have authority sufficient to engage his people to adopt a new plan of œconomy, calculated to se.

“ The hazard of an action with such a very great disparity of numbers, could not but become a matter of the most serious consideration; and, after the most mature deliberation, I did not think myself at liberty to risk, in so unequal a contest, his Majesty's troops, or those of his allies serving with them. I had the utmost reliance on their courage and discipline, and I had no doubt but that these would have enabled me to resist the first efforts of the enemy; but it could scarcely be expected that even by the utmost exertion of these qualities they would be able to withstand the reiterated attacks, which the vast superiority of the enemy would enable them to make, and which we know, from experience, is a general principle upon which they act.”

“ cure

“ cure them against the designs of a power-
“ ful neighbour, who, I shall suppose, has
“ formed schemes of invading and subduing
“ them: let him engage the whole proprie-
“ tors of lands to renounce their several pos-
“ sessions; or, if that supposition should ap-
“ pear too absurd, let him contract debts to
“ the value of the whole property of the na-
“ tion; let the land tax be imposed at twen-
“ ty shillings in the pound, and then let
“ him become bankrupt to his creditors.—
“ Let the income of all the lands be collect-
“ ed throughout the country for the use of
“ the State; let all the luxurious arts be pro-
“ scribed; and let those employed in them
“ be formed, under the command of the for-
“ mer land proprietors, into a body of regu-
“ lar troops, officers and soldiers, provided
“ with every thing necessary for their main-
“ tenance, and that of their wives and fa-
“ milies, at the public expence. Let me
“ carry the supposition further. Let every
“ superfluity be cut off; let the peasants be
“ enslaved, and obliged to labour the ground
“ with no view of profit to themselves, but
“ for

" for simple subsistence; let the use of gold
 " and silver be proscribed, and let all these
 " metals be shut up in a public treasure.—
 " Let no foreign trade, and very little do-
 " mestic, be encouraged; but let every man
 " willing to serve as a soldier be received
 " and taken care of; and those who either
 " incline to be idle, or who are found fu-
 " perfluous, be sent out of the country. I
 " ask what combination, among the modern
 " European princes, would carry on a suc-
 " cessful war against such a people? What
 " article would be wanting to their ease, that
 " is, to their ample subsistence?""

We could not but reflect that we were
 about to engage with a nation more empha-
 tically in the situation he describes, than it
 was possible for man antecedently to ima-
 gine could have existed;—with a nation
 where the only difference seemed to be, that
 it consisted on the lowest calculation of twen-
 ty-five millions of inhabitants, and enjoyed
 a degree of opulence proportionate to its ex-
 tended territory.

The

The proposal made by France, to give to maritime commerce the same protection which the law of nations secures to private property by land *, had been by us treated with contempt; but we could not now be blind to the situation of our commerce, and of theirs; to the little opportunity which presented itself to us of injuring them, to the extensive damages which from them in our situation we might sustain. It could not escape us, that our interference would naturally draw their attention to their marine; and we had then, as we have now, just reason to dread the consequences that their unlimited exertions, both in expence and labour, added to their superior skill in ship-building, would enable them to make.

At the commencement of the American war, the probability of the contest had been

* See Note presented by Chauvelin to Lord Grenville, dated 25th July, 1792.

" In conformity to the express orders of his Court, the
 " undersigned Minister Plenipotentiary of the King of the
 " French has the honour to transmit a copy of a ministerial
 " dispatch of the 13th of June, relative to measures to be
 " taken by the Maritime Powers for the abolition of pri-
 " vateering."

long

long foreseen ; the trade of our merchants was more limited ;—they had time to arrange their affairs, and their situation enabled them to do it with ease ;—but here the change of system was about to be so sudden, the trade of the country was so great, the paper credit so extended, that we could not but anticipate the shock we were likely to give to our commerce, the risque we ran of giving a vital blow to the commercial credit of our country.

Whilst these calamities naturally presented themselves to the mind of the man who reasoned upon the subject, it was impossible to extract from the imaginations of those whose sanguine folly had made them conceited about their views of ideal success, a prophecy of any event which reasonably afforded prospects of advantage, or even of indemnity for the sure loss we were to sustain.

When we were told that their settlements in the East, their colonies in the West, would

would fall an easy prey, it readily occurred to *our minds*, that though the acquisition in the East Indies might have appeared formerly of great use, insomuch as it would have disabled France from carrying on those intrigues amongst the native powers which had so often disturbed the peace of India, and involved us in war,—that now, when she had withdrawn in a degree her attention from that quarter, and was completely engrossed by the war on the Continent, and her situation at home, it could alone be estimated by the value and extent of the territory we acquired,—and that in this view it could form but a trifling article on the creditor side of the account. And whilst the extent of the advantages attending the acquisition of the West Indies presents to the mind, if they could be retained, a very difficult object of political enquiry, estimated even by the most sanguine, it could appear but a poor compensation for the calamities that might ensue.

When we were told, with a degree of folly which was well described as throwing ridicule

ridicule on the attempt of Cervantes to paint a disordered imagination *, that the exertions of the force we were likely to combine against her would ensure the conquest of France, even that was a thing which we could not seriously contemplate without alarm ; for, whichever plan we looked at as likely to be pursued in consequence of it, the prospect seemed equally gloomy ; we could not help foreseeing more of calamity than chance of indemnification, whether we anticipated the destruction of the balance of power in Europe by the partition of France, or the necessity of maintaining the authority of any government which by force we might establish over it.

Possessed of a form of government which we all loved and admired, it was with just dread and alarm that we saw the progress of the practice of the government of one country interfering by force in the interior arrangements of another : the conduct of the North-

* See Mr. Fox's Letter to the Electors of Westminster.

ern Powers with regard to Poland had with justice disgusted the nation ;—and as the doctrine made strides, as the scenes of its exertion approached nearer to us, if the prudence of our interfering to put an end to it could be doubted by any, the folly of our giving it sanction by adopting it ourselves was apparent to all ;—it was to check the principle of the right of interference that we were alone interested, and it signified not to us, whether the attempt was made on the part of the preponderant members of the Germanic body, to deluge France with blood in endeavouring to restore the authority of its monarch against his own and his people's inclination ;—or on the part of the Jacobins to affiliate the people of Brussels with the fword, and attempt by force what they called the emancipation of mankind. The spirit of our happy Constitution was fortunately as little congenial to the principles of the one, as of the other ; and it mattered not to us which of the political crusaders succeeded in their enterprise. For we could not forget, that if the Jacobins, when they talked
of

of the monarchical part of our government, insulted our ears by ridiculing what they impiously termed a *tigre couronné*;—the conspirators of Pilnitz listened with joy to the ridicule of any share of power being possessed by what, with equal impiety, was termed *The Representatives of the Swinish Multitude.*

To interfere with our mediation might have prevented the melancholy extent of the evil;—to interfere as a party unavoidably tended to increase it. If after every attempt to negotiate, to avoid by every peaceable exertion the calamity, we had been reduced to the unfortunate necessity of engaging, reason would have taught us to regret the disaster: but to plunge headlong into the calamity, without taking advantage of the various opportunities that presented themselves of avoiding it;—without endeavouring anxiously to wave all the little formalities and punctilioes that might stand in our way in the course of attempting by treaty to shun it, is a line which crooked policy or passion may have

have led us to adopt, which reason never could have permitted us to approve.

Such is the view of the subject that suggested doubts of the prudence of the system at its commencement, that has led me to maintain those doubts during its progress, and that now makes me look back with regret at every opportunity of endeavouring, by negociation, to secure or restore the peace of Europe, which we have neglected—that makes me regret, that when in July 1792 France solicited our mediation, and our allies hardly could have refused it, we thought proper not to interfere, on account of the formality of all the parties concerned not having applied to us, and the aversion we then so strongly expressed to taking a part in the internal affairs of another country* —that makes me lament, that in August 1792 we thought it necessary to recall our

* It is not easy to understand how our interference for the purpose of mediation, the thing M. Chauvelin solicited, could be stated by Lord Grenville to be inconsistent with the rights and the independence of the allies.—See Lord Grenville's Letter to M. Chauvelin, Whitehall, July 8, 1792.

Minister

Minister from Paris :—a step which, if we look at the conduct of the European Powers in the revolution in the Netherlands—during the Commonwealth or at the revolution in England—during all the various revolutions in the Constitutions of Denmark, Sweden, Bohemia, and Hungary, the practice of former times seems not to vindicate, and to which our own conduct in the recent revolutions of Poland and Flanders gives no countenance :—a step, the prudence of which it will be difficult to defend, when we consider that there never was a time in which we should so anxiously have wished for information of the interior situation of France; or in which, upon an enlarged view of our interests, it seemed so desirable for us, by well-judged interposition, amicably to put an end to the war in which she was engaged.

But above all I must sincerely regret, that in December 1792, when every sort of security was offered to Holland; when an explanation of the decree of the 19th December was

was given, which it will be difficult for those who have since united Corsica to the Crown of England to arraign; when opening the navigation of the Scheldt seemed the only point in dispute—that we did not adopt the motion of Mr. Fox, as a prelude to a negociation; and that we should have considered the punctilio, whether we should treat with an acknowledged Minister or secret Agent, to be of importance sufficient for us to sacrifice to it all chance of amicable arrangement.

It is this view of the subject, coupled with a sense of the calamities we have suffered, and the situation in which we now stand, that creates in my mind much sorrow that we treated with contempt the offer made us in April 1793 *, as well as another proposal

* See Le Brun's Letters, dated April 2, 1793, communicated to Lord Grenville through Mr. Salter, Notary Public.

Though the commencing a treaty through the medium of a Notary is undoubtedly novel, we ought to consider that it was difficult at the time to devise a mode of communication.

—And

proposal which was subsequently made in the autumn of the same year;—that we did not avail ourselves of the means which the expulsion of the French from Flanders, and the desertion of Dumourier in May 1793, gave us of proposing terms to them;—or of that opportunity we since possessed from our temporary advantages on the Continent, and our successes in the West Indies, of offering what to them must in reason have appeared advantageous terms.

Were I disposed to flatter myself, that in reviewing all those scenes, that in perusing what I have stated to you in defence of the measures I have uniformly supported, you may have found any thing which has induced you to hesitate, or doubt whether they may not be founded in truth; and whether, if that line of conduct had been adopted to which they would have naturally led, it

—And a knowledge of French habits teaches us, that they naturally annex to this mode of proceeding much more serious formality than it conveys to an English ear.—When the Parliament of Paris were refused access to the King, we find them taking a protest before a Notary.

might

might not have tended to the preservation of peace, and the consequent increase of our internal opulence and external importance.

—I am however well aware, that before I can have any well-founded hopes of vindicating my conduct in your estimation, there is another mode in which the subject has been argued, and in which it is necessary for me to consider it.

I have not forgot the cant of the advocate for war. I know on what he has harped. I recollect that the prophecy of destruction to the Constitution in the event of peace, is the spell with which he has enchanted the minds of those who have listened to him; that the annihilation of property, and the existence in this country of all those scenes of blood which we beheld with horror, is the dreadful threat with which he has subdued the minds, and for a moment arrested the reasoning faculties, of the community. It was well, it was artfully chosen. In a country, among the inhabitants of which property was more generally and universally

diffused than in any other; where there exist few whose industry has not put them in possession of something which they find an interest in preserving;—in a country, the spirit of whose criminal laws and political institutions had universally infused in the minds of its inhabitants a mild spirit of benevolence—it was with certainty you might predict its effect; it was sure to rouse the feelings, to influence the passions of the people; and when properly wound up, it required no great art and eloquence to guide the mind of the nation, to turn the fury of the moment against France, which the people of this country had long been accustomed to consider as a rival, whose inhabitants they had long regarded as their natural enemies:—a feeling in a degree suspended, whilst in forming a limited monarchy *she* seemed to pay a just tribute to the wisdom of our Constitution, but which now returned with increased vigour from a sense of her impertinence, in endeavouring, in her own idea, to lead the way in political improvement, when our prejudices had long confined

ed

ed her talents, and limited her sway, to improvement in the shape of a gown, or in the formation of a cap.

But, indeed, it was only at the moment we were under the guidance of passion that this belief of danger to our Constitution could spread, that this doctrine of dread of a similar revolution could make its proselytes: so soon as reason presided in the mind, the idea of danger was sure to vanish. In the situation of the two countries there was not the smallest similarity. In this country, justice was administered by known rules, and by judges skilled in the laws, who held their situation for life; in that, it had been a matter of favour and solicitation, which was dealt out according to the whim or caprice of those who had purchased the privilege *. The people of this country had
their

* The administration of justice was partial, venal, infamous. I have, in conversation with many very sensible men, in different parts of the kingdom, met with something of content with their government, in all other respects than this: but upon the question of expecting justice to be really and fairly administered, every one confessed there was no

their representatives, who, though it is anxiously to be wished that they were more emphatically the representatives of the people, are even now an important body of men, through whom they can state their grievances. In that country, the people saw no body of men who had not an interest to conceal and augment the hardships under which they laboured, and who were not in the daily practice of contributing towards their extent. Here there exists a nobility, intermingling with the other orders, by habit and ties of blood every where connected with the community, to whose title political power is invariably attached, who, if they had not the inclination, would, in the pursuit of their own interests, in the maintaining of their political influence, of necessity become habituated to favour and protect those beneath them. There, there existed a body

such thing to be looked for. The conduct of the Parliaments was profligate and atrocious. Upon almost every cause that came before them, interest was openly made with the judges; and woe betided the man who, in a cause to support, had no means of conciliating favour, either by the beauty of a handsome wife, or by other methods!—A. YOUNG.

of

of nobility isolated from the rest of the state, whose title had no political power connected with it, whose existence only served by their example to discourage industry, and whose privilege alone consisted in the power to oppress *. Though we laboured under the pressure of a large debt, we levied without any conspicuous oppression a revenue equal to the discharge of the interest, and to a considerable annual diminution of the capital. In France, as the national debt increased, in consequence of the privileges and exemptions of the clergy and nobility, the taxes on the people became oppressive in a degree beyond which government dreaded

* Besides the oppression that originated from the extent and inequality of public taxes, the exactions of the Seigneur were enormous. "What," says Mr. Young, "are these "tortures of the peasantry in Bretagne, which they call "chevanchés; quintains; foul; saut de poison; baifer de "mariées; transporte d'œuf sur un charette; silence des "grenouilles; corvée à miséricorde; melods; leide; cou- "ponage; cartelage; barage; fouage; mareaussée; ban "vin; ban d'aout; trouffes; gelinage; civerage; taillabi- "lité; vingtaine; sterlage; bordelage; minage; ban de "vendanges; droit d'accepte!"

to carry it *; and, by putting off the evil hour, they at last found the deficiency amount to the enormous sum of upwards of three millions sterling annually.—There, in the moment of suffering from this oppression, and in this desperate state of public credit, the people had been insulted by the profusion of the Court; they had seen in a few years, besides the debts he contracted, a

* Instances, and even gross ones, have been reported to me in many parts of the kingdom, that made me shudder at the oppression to which numbers must have been condemned, by the undue favours granted to such crooked influence. But, without recurring to such cases, what must have been the state of the poor people paying heavy taxes, from which the Nobility and Clergy were exempted? A cruel aggravation of their misery, to see those who could best afford to pay exempted, because able!—The inrollments for the militia, which the Cahiers call injustice without example, were another dreadful scourge on the peasantry; and, as married men were exempted from it, occasioned in some degree that inischievous population, which brought beings into the world in order for little else than to be starved. The Corvées, or police of the roads, were annually the ruin of many hundreds of farmers; more than 300 were reduced to beggary, in filling up one vale in Lorain: all these oppressions fell on the Tiers Etat only; the Nobility and Clergy having been equally exempted from tailles, militia, and corvées. The penal code of finance makes one shudder at the horrors of punishment inadequate to the crime.—A. YOUNG.

million sterlings, exclusive of his annual income, lavished by a Prince of the blood*. Here, the wise regulation of our laws permitted no such improvident expenditure in the ministers.

Our government was the active theme of praise in the mouths of every one;—theirs died a natural death, without exciting the lamentations of any:—in France, it might with truth be said, that the necessity of a change had brought about the revolution;—in this country, it was equally true, that the wanton love of change could alone generate the idea of one.

There, the great body of the people were more subjected to oppression than in any other nation of Europe;—here undoubtedly less so; and we could not forget that—“*Pour la populace, ce n'est jamais par envie d'ataquer qu'elle se soulève, mais par impati-*

* In the Red Book produced to the Assemblée Constituante, the Count D'Artois appears to have received that sum during the administration of M. de Calonne.

"*ence de souffrir* *," is the sentiment of a great man and a Minister of State; that it is the confession of a zealous assertor of monarchy.

Passion and prejudice are the most formidable enemies to the just decision of all questions submitted to the understanding; and though unfortunately they have often triumphed, perhaps in no instance was their triumph ever more conspicuous, or the dominion which in consequence of it they exclusively established over the mind of man, more complete.

Had reason been allowed to retain the smallest sway, it might perhaps have occurred, when things were going on quietly, and a new government apparently established in France, which promised to its inhabitants more felicity than they had heretofore enjoyed, that there might have existed amongst us some wrong-headed individuals, animated with a desire of imitation:—but

* Sully's Memoirs.

we should have seen, in the horrors which ensued in its progress, that which was sure to command the aversion of all. In this moment of delusion, however, when passion presided exclusively in our minds, the apprehension of the desire of imitation increased as the scene became disgusting;—and when armed with its antidote, the progress of the disorder became in our imaginations most likely to be alarming.

But if there was no reasonable ground on which a revolution in this country ought to have been dreaded; if it appears that in our imaginations the tendency towards it strangely seemed the most alarming, at the moment when in reality it must have been the least so; the mode of preventing it, adopted and universally relished, when examined, is that which must appear still more unaccountable.

War was the receipt held out to us to prevent all tendency to sedition, to annihilate in this country all idea of a revolution. In former

former times, wise men have told us, that the surest way to prevent seditions was to take away the matter of them.—But our statesmen strangely saw the best preventative in that which was sure in its progress to create the matter of them. The hardships and burthens of war have in all ages tended to give rise to discontent; the expence naturally creates poverty; and Lord Bacon wisely states, that the matter of sedition is of two kinds, poverty and discontentment. It was strange then to see that the favourite means adopted to prevent a revolution, was what the experience of man had taught him to believe almost universally generated it. Nothing but the prejudice of the moment could have made it palatable; at any other time the public would have said to the rash political empiric who prescribed it, as the Cynic did of old to a friend officiously advising him to send for a physician—“ If I die, I'll die at leisure.”

If before entering into hostilities we had reason to dread the calamities that were likely

likely to ensue from the war—if in it we saw not what was to prevent, but that which was much more likely to create the seditious disposition we apprehended, and the idea of revolution at which we trembled—we have received little consolation from the unfortunate events which have attended its progress. The accuracy of the predictions of those who opposed it might give rise to a little sensation of vanity, did not the melancholy situation of the country and our gloomy prospects preclude the possibility of any feeling of the kind. In the short period of eighteen months, during which we have been amused with the vague chimeras of our ministers, we have seen successively vanish before our eyes all those various sources of success with which we had vainly flattered ourselves.—Disgraced by the important efforts at Toulon; banished from the northern frontier; the rebellion crushed in La Vendée—France exhibits herself more powerful than before the contest. The practice of war has taught her armies the necessity of discipline, which did not at first exist,

exist, and upon the possession of which we founded our hopes. We have seen that the want of salt-petre could by exertion be supplied. We have learnt the impossibility of starving a nation. We know that a union of foreign force against them has furnished them a common cause in which with enthusiasm they unite—perhaps, on reflection, we may have reason to apprehend, with the only thing which could have stifled their internal feuds.—We have seen the heads of their political leaders and of their generals alternately brought to the block, without any diminution of their energy: and we have at last learned, that which we at first ought to have known—that the revolution of France is a revolution of opinion; that the war we are conducting is not against armies, but an armed nation.

We have given to a people who did not seem antecedently to possess it, the habit and taste for military enterprise; we have taught them that, of which from experience three years ago they were as ignorant as ourselves,

ourselves, that they are capable of successfully conducting it; and unfortunately we have at once disclosed to them, and to the world, the sad secret of their strength, and of our own weakness. The allied armies have, during this campaign, lost 150,000 men; and at the end of it, we shall in all have expended since the commencement of the war a sum that cannot be reasonably computed at less than thirty millions; and with all this waste of blood and treasure, if the object be the annihilation of the system in France, we have not purchased a single thing which the ingenuity of man can state as in the smallest degree tending towards our success in attaining it. Yet impetuous zeal still pervades our councils, and no one has yet asked,

“ Are not the lives of those who draw the sword,
 “ In Rome’s defence, intrusted to your care ?
 “ Should we thus lead them to a field of slaughter,
 “ Might not th’ impartial world with reason say,
 “ We lavish’d at our deaths the blood of thousands
 “ To grace our fall, and make our ruin glorious ? ”

By our perseverance in hostilities we have nearly brought ourselves into the contemp-

tible

tible but lamentable state of a nation emphatically described by Demosthenes as being—"the terror of its allies, the laughing-stock of its enemies." The Dutch, if they consider their situation, will, as applied to us, sympathise with the first part of the character; and the insertion of the word *dupe* is perhaps the only alteration, if he held my pen, that the King of Prussia would be inclined to make.

It is a melancholy thing to look back and view the proud eminence from which, by adopting this system, we have fallen; and still more so to contemplate that height which by persevering in an opposite conduct we might have attained:—the very interest of the money which we have thus lavishly expended, added to our sinking fund would have brought us at once to that enviable state of financial prosperity, to which the minister sanguinely announced we might have arrived in the year 1808: and it is difficult to define the limits of the degree of opulence to which that doctrine concern-

ing

ing the accumulation of capital (that has been ignorantly stated to have originated with Dr. Smith) would lead you in speculation to think you might arrive; or to the degree of commercial prosperity which, in consequence of the growing command of capital, we might have attained. But the most melancholy part of the picture is seen, when we view the importance which our riches, and the idea of our naval strength, had we remained neutral, would have given us in the eyes of the other nations of Europe, when contrasted with the exhausted situation in which the war must have involved them. Yet all these blessings were within our reach. Had we persevered in the system with which we started, they might in all human probability have been attained; had we, instead of conceiving the revolution in France to be a ground for involving us in war, learnt the only lesson which reason and prudence could have taught us to derive from it, they might have been secured; and by adopting a moderate and prudent reform, in the moment of peace and prosperity, of those imperfections

imperfections to which every human institution is liable, they might have been perpetuated. For, notwithstanding the present unpopularity that attends the idea of reform, I am not afraid to subscribe to the doctrine of one of our greatest statesmen and philosophers,—“ And if time of course alter things to the worse, and if wisdom and counsel shall not alter them to the better, what shall be the end?—it were good therefore that men in their innovations would follow the example of time itself, which indeed enervates greatly but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived.”—Nor can I refrain from reprobating the presumptuous folly of those who wish to restrain the reason and exertions of man from improvement in government, the excellence of which forms the surest source of his happiness and prosperity, at a time when they daily and hourly see the advantages derived in the more trivial concerns of life from the well considered application of his ingenuity.

I know

I know there are many who pretend such a reverence of this our constitution, as to affect to see even in its little imperfections fresh sources for their daily admiration: but were I to be called upon to judge on the comparative reality of the patriotism of those who wish moderate and gradual reform, and of those who wish to preserve the impurities with which time has impregnated our constitution; of those who in reforming are ever watchful, "that it should be the reformation that draweth on the change, and not the desire of change that pretendeth the reform,"—and of those who tremble at the idea of purging the state of any of its impurities;—reminding them of the speech of Alexander to his friends—"Hephæstion is the friend of Alexander; Craterus is the friend of the king,"—I would pronounce without fear of my judgment being impeached—You, the moderate reformer, are the real friend to the constitution. You, the obstinate admirer even of its abuses, are the friend of that which you think has brought

H you

you into power, and that which you look to as likely to preserve you in it.—Nay, were I disposed to go further, to such a man I would say, Your praise of the constitution is what I value not; it passeth away, and leaves no impression behind; I have lived too long, I have attended too constantly to the mode in which the politics of this country have been conducted, not to have learnt, that as history teaches me to regret the glory of God has since the commencement of the world been too often impiously used as a prelude to the temporal interests of the clergy—so a vague and empty rhapsody upon the beauties of our glorious constitution has uniformly preceded even the most corrupt plans that any minister in pursuit of his own interest ever dared to bring forward.

Having now stated to you what I conceive to be the melancholy result of having adopted the system on which we have acted, and what would have been the fortunate consequence of our having persevered in the opposite

opposite line; thinking myself that the reason of man cannot vindicate the preference which has been given, I will endeavour to state to you in my next the circumstances from whence it has originated.

Habituated to the consideration of the public conduct of the different parties that exist in this country; possessing frequent opportunities of knowing the private springs that have actuated them; it will in my next letter be my endeavour to trace the system to its legitimate parent, to shew you how it was generated by the art of some and the folly of others; how it owes its origin solely to intrigues for power in the interior of this country.

LETTER II.

Southend, Essex, Sept. 20th, 1794.

IT has hitherto been my principal view to endeavour to point out to you that the real interests of this country, impartially considered and well understood, would have led us to persevere in our original system of neutrality. That there was no absolute state necessity for our departure from it, appears sufficiently obvious. That reason never could have dictated a dereliction of its beneficial and salutary principles, is equally clear. And when I reflect on the chance of calamity which even Ministers themselves must have anticipated, from the measures they were resolved to adopt, I am forced to look for some other cause that must have guided them in their operations, than any of those ostensible reasons and feeble pleas they have hitherto held out to the Parliament and the public.

Nor does this investigation seem to be a task of much difficulty: their actuating principle is easily defined; though to state it with the hopes of conviction, when the public mind has been so long warped by erroneous opinions, is hardly possible.

Accustomed as almost all have been to view the present situation of the country as the result of one particular cause, however much it may be founded in original error, it must be difficult to eradicate the prejudice. Habitual indulgence must naturally have added to its strength; nor could it easily be supposed, when the feelings of the moment had connected in the minds of almost all, the salvation of every thing that is dear to us with engaging in hostilities, that the language of peace could be the language of popularity; or that the dictates of reason could soon gain an ascendancy over prejudice so inveterate, and delusion so complete. I could not therefore but be sensible of the difficulties attending my undertaking; and the anxiety this feeling naturally gave,

gave, the diffidence which it unavoidably created, may possibly have induced me to dwell more at length than perhaps I needed to have done (in this moment of calamity), in proving to you, that the war never could have originated from any just hopes of promoting the welfare of this country. It is that feeling also which now leads me, with a view to strengthen any impression I may have made upon you, to go further, and shew from what it actually did take its rise. The man accused, who produces in court the real criminal, exhibits the strongest, and most conclusive proof of his own innocence.

I shall not however here confine myself singly to that object. Deep as the calamity is, which this country has suffered by being plunged into war, the measures of ministers have produced evils of a different, though of a very serious nature. By their arts we have seen broken down, and in a manner annihilated; the importance of a party which had long distinguished itself for its temperate

rate and steady adherence to the real interests of the people. An eager and uniform supporter of that party, since I first engaged in politics; distinguished alone for my attachment to it when elected your representative; I had not presumption enough to look on your preference of me in any other light than as a mark of your predilection for it. To you therefore I cannot conceive that an account of the circumstances which have brought it into its present situation can be uninteresting. To me it is necessary; for, if I hope to retain your approbation, it is requisite to shew I had no share in demolishing the party, by giving a feeble support to which I am conscious I first acquired my only title to the possession of your favour.

The topics too are so much interwoven—the origin of the war, and the state into which that party is now brought, are subjects so much connected—that to treat of the one without touching upon the other would

be

be impossible; to treat of them separately difficult.

Long convinced that the welfare of this country depends upon the existence of a body connected on those principles the Whig party has been understood to possess; that the nature of its government creates it; that its preservation demands it; I am by principle a party-man; and it is therefore with pleasure I take the opportunity that this connection with the origin of the war gives me, of stating to you the utility of such combination under the government of this country, and of tracing shortly the history of that party whose fate I have now to lament, so far as is necessary to explain the situation of those personally concerned in politics at the beginning of the revolution in France.—I shall then be led to point out to you the origin and progress of the intrigue that had for its object to secure the possession of power, which has unfortunately deprived the nation of the advantage derived from so great a body of men united in

in the cause of freedom, and drawn upon it all the numerous misfortunes with which this war is likely to be attended.

By exhibiting the advantages which in this country we derive from a united body of men acting on principle, I hope to convince you, that though the calamities of war (the involving us in which was the sacrifice Mr. Pitt made to the Duke of Portland and his friends) are more immediately felt; their ultimate consequences cannot prove more seriously deplorable than the breaking up of the Whig party—the sacrifice that he gradually contrived they should make to him.

In endeavouring to establish the advantages of the existence of party in this country, I know I am about to lay down and defend a doctrine against which there exists a prejudice so general, that whilst we see in times past there is hardly any misfortune the historian does not rack his genius to trace home to this cause, so we now uniformly hear

hear all the misfortunes and calamities of the day vaguely attributed to the exertions of party-spirit, and the existence of party-feeling.

But a very little reflection must enable any one to detect the fallacy of the idea, and teach him to reject the opinion, with respect to this country, however generally it may be received.

Party in reality will be found to be attended with advantage, just in proportion to the degree the government under which it exists admits of its being founded on principle: in the simple forms of government there is no possible difference in principle which can give rise to combination; and therefore party under them must always be productive of temporary, often of permanent evil.

In a monarchy or a republic there can be no parties arising from difference in principle but such as give birth to confusion; they afford

afford no subjects on which to combine, but such as from their nature must tend to generate immediate convulsion. In the one, a difference of opinion with regard to the right to the crown, or a desire totally to overturn the government, upon account of real or ideal oppression, both possessing the seeds of instant conflict, are the only topics for which our imaginations enable us to conceive men can wish to combine, or that the annals of times past shew us they have united. There are under such a government no jarring principles upon which you can maintain different opinions ; the possession of power depends solely on the favour of the Sovereign, and favour is always more easily secured by individual address than by combined effort. In the other, the object which parties must naturally have, and which history points out as their main pursuit, is merely to support the pretensions of different individuals to public favour ; and whilst we recollect the evils of the disturbances attending such contests, we cannot but remember how often they have ended solely, in

in being the means of advancing the man of brilliant talents in preference to him whose more forcible pretensions were founded upon the purity of his intentions;—how often the crafty has been able to make party the engine of his elevation, at the expence of the able, the virtuous and discerning statesman.

In aristocracies, the object of parties has been to support the pretensions of different families to power; and though we have always seen them produce immediate calamity, it is in vain we look for any permanent benefit to the society, to compensate for the momentary evil. The struggle is here alone for who shall have the privilege of oppression; and the conduct of all men in power, if not well watched, has but too great a resemblance to make us think that such a contest can produce any lasting good.

In our constitution, however, of which in theory we are taught to admire the beauties, as proceeding from a due mixture of the different

ferent forms of government, there must arise naturally a difference of opinion on principle. He who gives himself up to the pursuit of honours and dignities, who loves the splendour of a court, attaches himself to the cause of monarchy, and soon sees in the increased power of the monarch the source of additional weight and splendour to those who surround the throne, and of increasing value to the favours which the sovereign can confer. He who possesses an ardent mind, conscious of its own rectitude, animated with a desire of building reputation upon a more solid foundation, naturally looks with anxious desire to acquire the approbation and applause of his fellow-citizens, and discovers with equal alacrity, in the extent of the power which they may possess or retain, the value of that he wishes to obtain.

Such a difference of opinion cannot long subsist without the existence of party founded on principle. The friends of monarchy have in the person of the monarch a com-

mon

mon bond of union; they derive from his councils a source of unity of action.

Poor and feeble would be the resistance which the isolated efforts of the disunited advocates of freedom could make against such an attack; there is nothing in their pursuit which naturally connects them. But they must soon see the necessity of uniting to preserve the value of that for which they all contend against the efforts of those who, from their situation, naturally present themselves in phalanx.—The folly of resisting the attack of an invading enemy by individual exertion, is too great, too apparent not soon to generate under such a government as ours, the appearance of popular party to counteract the effects of court intrigue. And as in the form of our constitution we perceive a natural tendency to produce a party of this description, so the benefits that must arise from it are too obvious not to strike any man who suffers his mind to consider the subject. Under the simple forms of government, party can alone tend to overturn the existing consti-

constitution, or to create temporary disturbances, without affording the hopes of permanent benefit. Under our mixed form of government, party on principle has a direct propensity effectually to preserve a due balance between the various branches of the government; and by the powerful check, which through this means the supporters of freedom are enabled to give to the gradual encroachments of the Crown, it has a tendency to prevent that ultimate disturbance, which the imperceptible extension of influence is sure to create, when it has made such advances that the "hoary head of in-
" vetebrate abuse can no longer draw reve-
" rence or obtain protection from the mul-
" titude."

If, in considering the theory of our constitution, we find this principle arising out of its very nature; if we discover, so far from being likely to sustain any detriment or injury from its adoption, that it always must prove itself a great prop to the vigour and stability of our government—when we descend

descend to view its practice, party will then appear more than ever necessary; the benefits arising from it will be still more conspicuous.

For if party constituted on sound principles, when we consider the constitution as theory represents it, seemed to form its best nourishment;—when cramped and crippled by its habitual disorder, corruption—it is the best medicine that the wisdom of the politician can prescribe; in proportion as corruption increases it becomes necessary; and now, when in a manner it has universally pervaded the frame of the government, without such a combination we can hardly look with hopes of safety to its existence.

To engage you in an investigation of the gradual departure of our constitution in practice, from that state of purity in which the theorist represents it; to state to you the mode in which the government is now practically conducted; to lay open to you all the numerous channels of corruption daily practised

tised to influence the minds of the community; to discover the art of forming a parliament, as it is called (which constitutes the chief excellence of the Secretary of the Treasury); to trace the pains and trouble that is taken to learn the mode in which the sentiments and conduct of individuals, from the highest to the lowest, can be rendered subservient to their views of self-interest (which forms a branch of the business of some underling in every office in the kingdom); to exhibit to you the various attempts which have been made, and are daily making, to cause this our happy constitution silently to dwindle into a despotism of influence—would lead me into a wider field than is consistent with the prosecution of my present plan; and the understanding of it in detail is unfortunately not necessary to convince you, or any one who lives in this country, that the habit of corruption has more deeply and universally pervaded the community, than it ever did any people of whose manners and customs we have a distinct account. To discover the cause of this,

I requires

requires not much greater exertion of our reason, than it unfortunately does of our observation to perceive the effects.

Power and political importance, which have been the desire, the anxious wish and the pursuit of the ambitious in all ages, have under different governments been acquired or obtained by various means;—by the favour of the people—by the partiality of the monarch—by private intrigue—by open canvass—by public display of opulence and magnificence;—nay, even by secret largess. But it was reserved to the *practice* of this constitution, to exhibit to the eye political power not only secretly obtained by indirect means, but become the object of open and avowed sale and purchase; to see a market price affixed to the guardianship of the rights of the people, and the usufruct, the possession or the reversion of it, alternately brought under the hammer ‡.

‡ To state examples of the two former must be unnecessary; the fact is notorious. But it has been reserved for the refined corruption of the present times, to sell even the reversion of national representation—an instance of which I could now state.

New

New as this phenomenon is, its consequences are obvious. Money in a country where such abuses prevail acquires a novel and additional value, a value of the most dangerous kind, which it was never known antecedently to possess; for, as it thus supplants the necessity of exhibiting character and public spirit, which should be the sole recommendation to favour and confidence, it establishes itself in request, just as it discourages the habit and the fashion of cultivating every thing that is virtuous, and which ought to lead to the acquiring of power. The influence of this open and corrupt traffic cannot be supposed to confine itself to the elector. The man who by his virtue has recommended himself to the favour of others, whose patriotism and ability have formed the ground of their predilection—when their representative, naturally regards a perseverance in the line of virtue and real patriotism to be the surest mode of securing a continuance of their partiality, and a renewal of that trust with which they have invested him. But the man who has

acquired it by purchase, with equal justice, and in reality arguing upon the same principle, can consider it alone as useful in so far as he may make it conduce to the filling up that blank, created by the price he has paid, in his capital; or perhaps of increasing his stock in trade, and by that means of enabling him to return with additional recommendation to a future canvas;—and thus, with the same indifference for the measures he supports that his constituents had for the person they elected, he is led at once to display with true sympathy in *his* sphere, the feelings that actuated them in *theirs*;—and the corruption of the representative soon becomes as open and avowed as that of his constituents.

If commerce, riches, and the luxurious habits they produce, have had at all times a natural tendency to create venality, how much stronger must be their effect in a climate so propitious to the growth of corruption! The sure consequence that must attend the increase of wealth and luxury under a

government so completely impregnated with an open and avowed system of corruption, upon national character, is too obvious to require illustration. No one doubts a despotic government is calculated to render men pliant, and a free one resolute and independent; no one can doubt that excessive venality will be the characteristic of a people reared under such a government. Refinement of manners cannot be more natural to the courtier, bluntness and sincerity to the man born under a popular government, than the study of his self-interest must be to the man so trained.

From openly pursuing it, and sacrificing every other consideration to this feeling, there can arise among such a people no shame; every one is familiarised to it from his infancy; custom has rendered it habitual; and it is soon alone regarded as what is called the way of the world—something which either may or must be practised to hinder us from being the dupes of our own integrity. From the highest to the lowest it

it must shew itself equally the leading principle that directs the conduct of every one; and we cannot be surprised at seeing the proverbial apology of a poor domestic, when quitting his indulgent master, become familiar to all—nay, the first in rank and fortune, in endeavouring *to better themselves*, feeling an ample compensation for every dereliction of opinion and every desertion of principle.

When government has come to be thus in practice carried on, when this mode of conducting it has prevailed for such a length of time as to have had its full effect in moulding the character and forming the sentiments of the community, party on principle becomes more than ever necessary; individual effort is not only inefficacious, but it is almost impossible that it should exist in any great extent. To expect from any man, that the pure sense of virtue and patriotism should enable him to conquer in himself all those desires and habits with which the system of his education, precept, example, and the

the manners of the society have stamped his character, and that he should exhibit perseverance in this conduct when he sees that it commands the applause of none, is almost impossible. But it is wild and romantic to think, that there can be any such instances of individual forbearance, when we reflect that the general venality which is thus produced has rendered the sacrifice of public principle (if the price is approved), whatever rank, age, or sex, you look to, sure of commanding the sympathy of all, the approbation and applause of most.—The man whose feelings, from early impression, have been from infancy in unison with the sentiments which this political depravity has generated; or he who, in passing from the college to the commerce of the world, has in compliance with constant custom sacrificed sooner or later to the ruling propensities of the society every principle to which his mind was attached, are equally ready to mark with admiration the conduct of such a profelyte;—and even the woman, who, compliment to the morality of the times,

has made the early but important sacrifice of affection to interest, and now in affluence leads a comfortable life, remote from the man to whom the sympathies of her mind attached her, flattered with authority that seems to countenance and sanction her conduct, is ready to join in the general chorus of applause.

In such a situation, to resist the progressive annihilation of every thing like patriotism, even with the assistance to be derived from the combined effort of party, is difficult; without it, impossible. Through the medium however of party formed on principle, we obviously acquire the means of giving to the little remnant of public virtue that is to be found, all the vigour which it can derive from the assistance of private sentiments of honour in the breasts of those who are in any degree connected with it. Friendship, relationship, all the ties which are capable of connecting or attaching men, become by this means successively auxiliaries in the cause of public virtue, and unite their

their strength to enable it to make its last stand against the efforts of overgrown corruption; nay, even venality itself is often forced for the moment into the service of virtue, and men with benefit to the community are taught to stem their natural propensity to give way to immediate corruption, whilst they glut themselves with the views of future benefits which their imagination presents to them.

To suppose that even party (however skilfully conducted) in such a contest can be successful, is difficult; but all must agree that it arms the minds of those attached to it with the most powerful weapon to resist the vicious propensities created by the mode of conducting our government; and that it enables us to erect the only fortress in defence of public virtue, even the out-works of which have for a series of years shewn themselves impregnable when assailed by corruption.

But the good effects of party in the present situation of this country rest not even here.

here. Those who are thus by various means united, get individually pledged to a system of conduct; and if they afterwards attain power, private honour becomes (greatly to the advantage of the public) a spur to the recollection of the minister, who from the corruption incident to the situation is but too apt to forget every principle he antecedently possessed.

Party too naturally draws the attention of all. The community at large, some from principle, most from views of immediate or remote interest, become the adherents of those in possession of power, or of those connected on principle; their disputes attract and monopolize the attention of the community, and thus effectually protect our constitution from the licentious investigation of the ignorant, the busy and aspiring, and give time for the hand of the skilful, uninterrupted by tumult, to administer those preventatives against the undermining effects of time, which in all human institutions are necessary, and which all wise politicians will

will adopt. Numerous were the elogies and lampoons on the mistresses and the ministers of the kings of France that used formerly to be handed about; infinite are the numbers of satires, essays and pamphlets, which in this country have appeared to exhibit the political depravity of ministers, or their opponents; and we cannot but observe, that whilst the wit and talents of the community have been thus employed and exhausted, the beauties of the constitution and the virtues of the grand monarch have formed equally the theme of the vague praise of the multitude *.

The theorist in politics may harangue against party, as the moralist has often done against that false system of honour which in

* That the existence of party has thus protected the constitution; that it has thus secured to it the admiration of all, even without enquiry, by monopolizing the attention; none can doubt, when we reflect, that though the volumes are numerous indeed which have been written on the subject of party controversy, there exists no one work by a native of this country, which confines itself to the consideration of our constitution, and professes to treat of it at large.

modern times has given rise to duelling, and guides in a degree the intercourse of life; but as the advantage of the one is in society apparent to all, there is none who has attended to the mode in which this government is in practice conducted, who must not be convinced of the benefit and even the necessity of the other: indeed the marked aversion uniformly shewn to it by the courtier, is not a stronger proof of his sense of its salutary effect in restraining the corrupt influence of the Crown, than the eager and constant attacks of the advocates of The Rights of Man are of their feeling of its tendency to preserve our constitution.

It was the idea of this extreme utility of party, under the government of this country as it is conducted in practice, that must have led those who acted on principle to unite in forming and supporting that party which Lord Rockingham passed his life in rearing, and which Mr. Fox has uniformly exercised his talents in maintaining and supporting.

Their

Their object has at all times undoubtedly been to acquire power; for "Power to do good is the true and lawful end of aspiring. Good thoughts towards men are little better than good dreams, except they are put in act; and that cannot be without power and place as the vantage and commanding ground *."—But they disclaimed court intrigue as the mode of acquiring it, and rejected corruption as the sole means of retaining it: they sought to make their course regular, that men might know before hand what they had to expect; and looked to that attachment which the principles they possessed ought to have created in the minds of the people, to that respect which they must have commanded in the breast of the sovereign, as the only channel through which they could attain power with any probable benefit to the community.

If habit had rendered it impracticable to carry on the government without corrup-

* Lord Bacon.

tion, their system, by calling in principle to its aid, tended at least gradually to diminish the necessity of the extent of it.—By giving power to those whose situation entitled them to it, and whose characters gave additional respect to the possession of it—and not exclusively to those whose corruption led them uniformly to barter every thing that could make their public characters respectable for the privilege of enjoying or dispensing it—they hoped to secure the approbation and support of the public, without having recourse to that system of corruption with which ministers had long been accustomed to influence it ; and thus, while they flattered themselves that the measures they were pledged to pursue when they attained power, would increase the happiness of the people and the importance of the nation, they looked to their mode of conducting the government, as likely to introduce by example, as well as by precept, something more of purity of principle into the degenerate and habitually corrupt minds of the people.

Such

Such were the benefits it was the uniform object of the only party which has existed in this country of late years united on principle, to secure to the nation ; and such the means by which they at first proposed attaining them. But it was our misfortune that the power of satisfying the venality, which the practice of government had generated, daily increased ; that the corrupt influence of the Crown became more and more extensive ; that it decayed not with our danger, nor diminished with our decrease, but increased as our debt became oppressive, as the immediate expences of our government grew enormous. During the American war, the expenditure was so immense, that it afforded the means of almost unbounded influence ; so much so as to destroy all hopes that principle would be able gradually to supplant corruption ; and it soon became apparent that there was a necessity for some immediate and forcible means of checking its progress, and diminishing its extent.

It was then that the party under Lord Rockingham, and those with whom they acted, brought forward and pledged themselves to the support of all those numerous regulations and reforms in the management of the government of the country, some of which they afterwards fortunately carried into execution ; but in the opinion of many of the leading men amongst them, even these served only as temporary palliatives. Alive to a sense of the danger from that excessive venality which the practice of our constitution had produced, from the extravagant means of satisfying it which our calamities had created, they now regarded the limiting the power as inadequate at a time when the magnitude of the evil made it necessary, in part at least, to root out the causes of its existence.

They felt that there was no hope till the purity of the constituent body, and thereby that of their representatives, should be restored. Meetings were accordingly called, committees of correspondence appointed, associations

associations formed, conventions of delegates from the different counties, cities, and towns, who had petitioned parliament, publicly held, with the approbation, concurrence and countenance of many of the first men of that party*; and before Lord Rockingham's acquisition of power, a discussion of the question of reform in the representation of parliament became one of their avowed objects. Mr. Pitt accordingly, in whose hands it was placed to be brought forward, soon after the formation of that administration, stated, "that the ministers "had declared their virtuous resolution of

* Proofs of the Duke of Portland, Marquis of Rockingham, Lord Fitz-William, Mr. Thomas Grenville, Mr. Windham, Mr. Burke's having attended with assiduity the committees and associations formed in the different counties, may be found in *The Remembrancer*: they are also much detailed in letters lately published in *The Morning Chronicle* under the signature of Hampden.

In the fourth article of the Protest entered in the Journals of the House of Lords, Feb. 8, 1780, there is an eloquent defence of the expediency and legality of Associations; amongst the signatures affixed to it, are to be found Portland, Devonshire, Richmond, Rockingham, Fitzwilliam, Temple and Camden.

" supporting the king's government by
 " means more honourable as well as more
 " permanent than corruption ; and the na-
 " tion had confidence in the declaration of
 " men who had so invariably proved them-
 " selves the friends of freedom and the ani-
 " mated supporters of an equal and fair sys-
 " tem of representation *."

These were the objects that out of power they recommended, that in power they were pursuing, when the overturn of that administration, which the illness of Lord Rock-

* Mr. Pitt had then possibly seen a paper to this effect drawn up by the Duke of Richmond, the Marquis of Rockingham, and the Marquis of Lansdown, and which, though not formally signed by them, was interchanged in their hand writings. Mr. Wyvill had also probably given him an account of the communication with Lord Rockingham, which he has since printed in his political papers. Lord Rockingham, having shewn him notes of the terms which his Majesty had acceded to before his coming into administration, stated, "that the Duke of Richmond on seeing the conditions above mentioned had observed, that no mention was made of a reform in parliament, and proposed, as an additional stipulation, that the discussion of that subject in parliament should be agreed to; which he Lord Rockingham consented to."

ingham

ingham perhaps retarded, which it certainly, by no means contributed to, weakened for a time the Whig party. The avidity of some to retain the power they had acquired, of others to possess themselves of those situations to which they aspired, in a considerable degree diminished their numbers. But there never was more cordiality in principle than there existed among those who persevered in the objects of the party, and remained at this time united:—they had shewn themselves by experience to be animated with the same ideas of public conduct—they had done more, they had proved themselves in practice capable of resisting the temptations of office and power, if not to be attained or retained by means which they considered constitutional. They had opportunities for observation; and they were not so devoid of reflection, as not to have discovered that the path which Lord Auckland afterwards explored, through which Lord Loughborough marched, and into which so many chosen Whigs have lately walked, was the sure and immediate road to power. Ambitions how-

ever of the public welfare, they had long taught themselves to think that any view of individual ambition, or even a difference of opinion on any particular measure, was to be regarded as secondary to a perseverance in those principles, and in that system, which their creed led them to believe were the only security for the happiness of the people and the prosperity of the nation.

Such were the men, who, when admiring the virtues of Lord Rockingham, and regretting his death, looked to the Duke of Portland as likely from his character and virtues to fill the situation with most credit to himself and advantage to the cause; and again erected under him the standard of party, that they might continue to give to that system, and to those measures which they had long pursued, the assistance and support which party, by enabling them to call private honour and even views of interest in aid of public virtue, at all times secures:

Thus

Thus they remained united, ready as they always had been to receive assistance from all, resolved, in the pursuit of the acquisition or retaining of power by any other means, to give their support to none * ;—and it was not long till Lord North's joining them produced (after a six weeks interregnum, employed in every endeavour at Court to avoid it) the necessity of forming an administration under the Duke of Portland, as first Lord of the Treasury. The intrigues however that took place to prevent its formation, were only a prelude to those that were resorted to to effect its dissolution ;—and which terminated, after a fruitless attempt on the subject of the Prince's revenue, in the most open and scandalous exertion of the influence of the Crown, to defeat the measures of its ministers relative to the government

* Upon this is founded the distinction betwixt the two coalitions which the Duke of Portland has formed. In the first, he received the assistance of Lord North, to forward the views of the party, as was sufficiently obvious from the opposition of the Court: in the last, he has lent his assistance to the support of that system and even of *that* administration which he had so often reprobated.

of India. The effort was attended with success, the bill was thrown out in the House of Lords, and Mr. Pitt was brought forward as Minister: and whilst he was in private employed in corruptly lavishing every favour the Crown could bestow, to procure support, the friends of the Duke of Portland must now with shame remember, that in public, the favourite topics of his present colleague were the vice of an unprincipled coalition, and the imminent danger to the constitution from the prevalence of the aristocracy; that he then saw security alone in the unbridled efforts of a mob, or in the unrestrained exertions of that secret influence, to destroy which had been the constant object of the Whig party.

The mischief that seemed likely to attend this unlimited exercise of influence, this open corruption that then prevailed, was great; and as the impression of its fatal effects produced on those who then opposed him was strong, so the disapprobation in the public correspondence of the Duke of Portland at their head was marked.

To

To see, to speak, to treat with the Minister whilst he retained the situation which he had thus unconstitutionally acquired, was deemed and stated to be a dereliction of principle*; and virtually to involve the surrender

* Extract of a Letter from the Duke of Portland to Thomas Grosvenor, Esq. Chairman of the Members of the House of Commons met at the St. Albans Tavern, dated

“ Devon House, Saturday 31 Jan. 1784.

“ I believe you will agree, that the continuance of the present Ministry, and the honour of the House of Commons, are not very easily reconcilable.”

Extract of a Letter from Ditto to Ditto.

“ Monday morning, 2d February, 1784.

“ I very sincerely regret that the expedient to which I referred should be thought inapplicable to the difficulties I had stated. I certainly suggested it as a mode of resignation the least embarrassing to Government, in the ordinary functions of office, and, at the same time, as a proof of a disposition to consult the honour of the House of Commons; as it stands pledged by the Resolution of the 16th January. This last is a preliminary, which, as a friend to the spirit of the Constitution, I must think myself bound invariably to require.

“ With respect to myself, I am willing to hope, that I have not been mistaken in the conception I formed of your wishes,

render of every tenet relative to the Constitution, which as Whigs they had maintained.—As things were then situated, it was not however to be expected, that corruption would not privately produce its effect. Many of those who had joined under Lord North, had been too long accustomed to the system that prevailed when he formerly conducted the government, to suppose that it would not be attended with success; it in reality soon diminished the numbers of Opposition; and, aided by the clamour which was every where prevalent at the general election that ensued, established that ma-

“ wishes, by supposing that it was with Mr. Pitt that you
 “ were desirous I should have a liberal and unreserved inter-
 “ course, and not with the head of an Administration to
 “ which I was merely to bring an accession of strength. But
 “ Mr. Pitt’s message places him in another character; and
 “ your own good sense will readily suggest to you, that it was
 “ impossible for me to suppose that your expectations extended
 “ to a confidential conference with him as the representative of
 “ the present Administration.

“ If I had done this, I must have fallen in your esteem
 “ (which I assure you is a very serious object to me), as I
 “ should have shewn myself insensible of what is due to the
 “ House of Commons.”

jority

jority which has since supported the Minister.

But it left the Duke of Portland at the head of a party (in respect of numbers and ability, more powerful than the history of the country antecedently furnished any example of) bound to support the measures of Lord Rockingham, with the additional pledge of refraining from all connection with those concerned in the late intrigue for power, till by relinquishing their situations, thus improperly obtained, they had in a degree wiped away that injury which the constitution was supposed to have sustained from their conduct.

For years the Minister retained his majority; and the party, though individuals might differ about particular measures, remained united, maintained their principle, and pursued their system. Their strength and ability were such as seemed likely ultimately to ensure success; and whilst it thus created a doubt in the minds of all, whether they offered up the surest sacrifice to their venality,

venality, by consulting their immediate or their remote interests, it encouraged the public to speak out its mind upon the important questions that occurred; and in many instances gave that efficacy to their opinion, even when hinted, which, without the existence of such a party, it would have been in vain in the situation of the country to have expected. Of this, during the course of these last ten years, there have been many examples; none however more marked than that which took place on the recent instance of the Russian armament; on which occasion the ministry were induced hastily to relinquish their measures, in a manner as disgraceful to themselves as it was probably fortunate for their country; in a manner, however, which, as it contributed in no small degree to weaken and degrade in public estimation those who conducted the government of the country, so it added both in strength and popularity to their opponents.

Such was the situation of those concerned in the politics of this country at the commencement

mencement of the year 1792. The revolution in France, though it had engaged the attention of all, though the opinions entertained of it were known to be various, when alluded to in public, seemed to be considered universally as likely to secure to this country a certainty of peace and tranquillity.

Mr. Burke alone had at that time viewed it as pregnant with immediate calamity; he had twice introduced the discussion in Parliament, in a manner that was deemed by those who had long loved him and wished to repress it, disorderly; by those who had long shewn their aversion to him, and who now wished mischievously to encourage him, indiscreet:—but he was openly supported in his opinions by none; and it seemed improbable, that what was universally deemed the folly of one man should become the politics of all. Through life he had displayed talents that deservedly commanded admiration; but his want of judgment and feeling had so enfeebled their effect, that whether

he was employed in hurling his Sovereign in the hour of calamity from the throne, in brandishing a Jacobin dagger in the senate, or in bespeaking the favour of the court for the criminal he was about to accuse; by the ill-judged coarse invective in which he indulged, the best exertions of his talents were no longer received but with a mixture of pity on the part of his friends, and contempt on the part of his opponents. His opinions, and even his exertions in public, had been through life attended with much unmerited unpopularity; and it seemed therefore hardly possible, that at a moment when (to use his own language) he had so softened, diluted, blended, and weakened, the distinguishing colours of his life, as to leave nothing distinct or determinate behind —that he should be able to sow the seeds of the remote dissolution of that party, which perhaps he had long injured by his support; —or that his writings, to the misfortune of his country, would be in future resorted to as the only grammar that contains the elements of the present politics of the nation. .

But

But as party has always been the most formidable check upon those who have acquired power by intrigue, and retained it by corruption; to divide and disunite has ever been their most eager pursuit, and the slightest opportunity was too valuable to be lost. Nothing could display this in stronger colours than the anxiety of the adherents of Administration to promote Mr. Burke's being allowed to discuss the French revolution in the committee on the Quebec Bill;—and the hopes of future support artfully thrown out upon that occasion by the Minister himself, to a man whom he had ever antecedently treated with haughty contempt, exhibited a strong proof of the satisfaction he derived even from the most distant hopes of creating disunion, but proceeded probably more from a compliance with the general system of conduct to be pursued, than from any expectation that yet dawned upon him of being able through such a medium to effect the disunion of his opponents.

It

It was not however long before a more flattering opportunity presented itself. Early in this year, a conviction that the abuses in France had been suffered to gather and accumulate until nothing but an eruption could put an end to them, and that preventative remedies had not been thought of in time, or were not proposed until it was too late to carry them into effect, induced many belonging to the party to think, that the experience of the day now taught them to look to a reform in Parliament as more than ever desirable. Lord Chatham had stated it "as necessary to infuse a portion of new health into the Constitution," and had declared, "that in his opinion, without it, this nation, with the best capacities for grandeur and happiness of any on the face of the earth, must be confounded with the mass of those whose liberties were lost in the corruption of the people." Many of the ministers had formerly supported it;—the leading man in opposition had been active in committees and associations to promote it;—Lord Rockingham,

ingham, antecedent to coming into administration, had formally adopted it;—and the prospect of peace and tranquillity, held out by those in power as certain, seemed to point out the time as peculiarly adapted to it. They had seen in France, that as government was gradually weakened it had been reduced from bargaining with the people to yield to them: and they conceived, that now, when the Constitution was rooted in the affections of almost all, was the only time when you could attempt to perpetuate the attachment to it, by giving to the people that weight to which in the eyes of most they seemed according to the spirit of our Constitution to be entitled,

From the Minister they had every reason to expect support to a measure which has been emphatically styled the legacy of his dying father, and his own virgin effort;—from some of the heads of the party with whom they were connected they knew they would meet with opposition; but they could not expect a very eager or ardent resistance

of

of measures which they themselves had formerly with such activity pursued: and as the difference of opinion upon the subject of parliamentary reform was known; as it was understood, and in a manner explained *, that it never could tend to the disunion of the party, they at all events saw no danger of depriving the country of the sure benefits which were likely to flow from it.

When, however, a notice was given on the subject in the House of Commons; regardless of his former conduct, the Minister shewed himself so eager, that in a manner unusual, and even disorderly †, he retracted his former opinions on the subject, invidiously connected the proposal with an

* At a meeting at Burlington House, in the beginning of March, 1792, for the purpose of consulting on a measure that was then to be brought forward, parliamentary reform was openly stated to be a subject on which there were known to exist three separate and distinct opinions in the party. But this was never considered as a ground of disunion.

† To debate a subject upon a notice given, and when of course there can be no question before the House, has always been deemed in Parliament irregular.

intention

intention of exciting in this country a revolution similar to that in France, and with triumphant applause announced his apostacy: it was a subject on which he had formerly been opposed by many of those who acted with the present Opposition, and on which he was sure to obtain his favourite object of dividing the strength of that party which he now more than ever dreaded: he remembered the line they had formerly taken too well to doubt that numbers of them would give his new opinions their decided support; and if to the prospect of such a division his own consistency seemed to him then but a poor sacrifice, the opportunity afforded by a declaration in debate of their being ready to concert measures with him, must have indeed amply compensated for any loss of character which in his estimation he was likely to sustain, and was a thing not to be neglected by a Minister, whose friends will find it difficult to prove that he has not on the subject of reform listened with as much attention to betray, as he has spoken with assiduity to deceive.

L

To

To force on the question of reform itself was impossible; the notice had been given for the following session of Parliament: but in the course of the discussion that had taken place, the love of French principles, the resolutions of certain societies, and the doctrines of some pamphlets that had been circulated, had been so artfully blended with the subject of reform, that the pledge given to unite and consult on the one was conceived to extend to the other.

Even upon those subjects, to devise a question that could be brought forward with honour to himself, and with advantage to his country, was difficult; but it was at that moment too desirable not at all events to be attempted.—By means of a proclamation, and a proposed address of thanks, a measure was therefore soon contrived, which carried internal evidence of its being brought forward with no other view than invidiously to attempt to separate those who had been so long connected. To promote that end it was admirably calculated; it was projected
the

the moment there appeared the most remote probability of creating it;—as devised to produce the real effect intended, it commanded admiration;—but the impudence of the attempt would have startled any one less practised in the arts of delusion than those by whom it was framed. No ostensible ground that it held forth could reasonably account for its appearance at the moment. It alone stated the existence of publications that had been openly circulated for a length of time, of writings industriously recommending them that were not new to the public eye; and it hinted at the danger of societies whose resolutions had long been openly advertised. The resorting to so extraordinary a measure seemed a declaration of the inadequacy of that constitution, which they held out to our admiration, to protect itself by the usual provisions of its laws. It in a manner recorded their past inattention to the dangers which they then deprecated; and confessed their inability to discharge the ordinary duties of their station without the extraordinary aid of Parlia-

ment; and it seemed likely, by the weakness and inefficiency which it exhibited in his Majesty's councils, to be more derogatory from the just authority of government than any imaginary progress, which with great injustice to a loyal people they attributed to the principles asserted in the writings of which they complained. But these dangers to the peace of the community were regarded as trifling; the indirect avowal of incapacity and inconsistency appeared to the Minister small, when compared to the finis-
ter advantages that attended a measure which held out the sure prospect of pro-
ducing private consultation and communica-
tion with those with whom whilst in office he had eight years before, in vain, endeavoured to obtain it, and of creating at once disunion where for eight years he had in vain at-
tempted to sow the seeds of it.

He had alternately courted popularity and Court favour, as means of obtaining power *. He had conjoined both to secure it †; but in

* In his opposition to the American war, and bringing on the question of reform, he seems to have aimed at the one; and, in coming into office after Lord Rockingham's death, to have taken advantage of the other.

† When he became first Lord of the Treasury.

abjuring

abjuring that reform in the representation, the ground on which he had aimed at acquiring the one, he seemed to have diminished his chance of popular support, as much as his recently insisting on his Sovereign's dismissing Lord Thurlow must have diminished his claim to the other. And he now therefore more than ever looked to the dismemberment of his opponents, and the possible chance of acquiring by that means some new support, as the object which ought, and in reality did, direct all his measures.

That the proclamation was by the Minister himself considered as a measure of private expediency, and not of State necessity, can hardly be doubted. In any other point of view there could have existed no necessity of consultation with Burlington-House; he required not the addition of their numbers; his triumphant and confiding majority still remained; he was still surrounded by the protecting influence of those who had supported him since he was at the helm of affairs; he had in his hands the full means of carrying his measures into effect; and without

out consultation he was already secure of the voice of those who had listened to him with approbation on the notice given of a motion for reform.

To open the door to private negotiation with them must have been his aim. If he as Minister really thought it necessary to adopt measures for repressing a spirit of insurrection in the country—what were these measures? Was the proclamation the only one he at this time proposed? Had he no idea of then calling out the militia, and of other measures he has since adopted? Or was no such intimation given to Burlington-House? Is it not notorious that they acquiesced in the first part of his proposal, and rejected the rest? and that in compliance with the opinion of men no ways connected with the executive administration of the country, and in no degree responsible for its effects, the Minister laid aside measures he himself had stated as necessary for the public good?—that the militia remained quiet? and that the proclamation, cut and

carved

carved into a different shape by the still squeamish followers of the Duke of Portland in his new pursuit, was deemed sufficient by Mr. Pitt, because it was satisfactory to them? If he was in earnest therefore in his belief of danger, to his private ends he sacrificed the interests of his country. If his dreads were assumed, we see in this early stage a self-evident proof of that system of conduct he has since for similar purposes invariably pursued—wisely perhaps for his private ends, but unfortunately with too much success for the welfare of his country.

By the first appearances that attended this attempt to divide, he had no reason to be discouraged; the proclamation produced both private consultation with him and public difference of opinion in his opponents. But to those who at private meetings heard the strong declarations of adherence to the system on which the party was founded, and of undiminished enmity to the principles on which the administration was formed, and
had.

had been conducted *, there appeared little prospect of his ultimately effecting any coalition. And even their public language must have afforded him but a discouraging prospect: he could hardly imagine that the Viceroy of Corsica could be induced to wave differences that were fundamental and irreconcileable †; or that Mr. Windham would soon strip himself of his embroidered suit of pretence, and share with him the tattered rags of his genuine deformity; that he could be prevailed upon to exhibit himself in conjunction with him before a confiding majority, like the uncased Frenchman in ruffles without a shirt—in tinsel and lace on the outside, and in dirt and dæwlas within ‡:

and

* Before the debate on the proclamation, a meeting was held at Mr. Fox's of all those in Opposition who were likely to take part in the debate on either side, for the purpose of communicating the line they intended following in debate, and thus marking in the strongest possible manner the practicability of its creating disunion.

† Words used by Sir Gilbert Elliott, in a speech which, as it appeared to have been written, must have been studied.

‡ See Mr. Windham's Speech on Mr. Thompson's motion, "To inquire into all abuses committed by persons in
" office

and the declaration made in debate by the Duke of Portland himself, did not seem to be calculated to give him much encouragement. As he had prevailed however in establishing a private communication on the subject of the proclamation, in a manner contradictory to the antecedent declarations of the party, he felt doubtless to a degree encouraged by a channel being now for the first time opened, through which an experiment might be made.

That the Minister should sacrifice one of the main props of his government to the unnatural object of providing for one whom he had ever reprobated, and by whom he had been uniformly, with acrimony, opposed, seemed strange ; that at the moment of holding forth in public the necessity of supporting and strengthening the hand of government, he himself should choose to overturn one of the principal pillars by which his

" office at the election of a Member to serve in Parliament
 " for the City of Westminster, in July 1788—as far as
 " the same relates to penalties incurred under the Excise
 " Laws, or Lottery Act."

power

power had been supported, was singular. But his plan was now obviously concerted ;— the apparent division of Opposition had disclosed to him new views of personal greatness : with the subtlety he has ever possessed, he grasped at the opening ; and to add to the probability of its success, disregarding what must have been the feelings of his Sovereign, and forgetful of the services he had rendered, by the dismission of Lord Thurlow a door was opened to the completion of the views of the man in Opposition that he must have regarded as most likely to listen to his offers. He recollects the conduct of Mr. Wedderburn, when he became Solicitor General ; and if he did not augur from thence a probability of succeeding in detaching Lord Loughborough and some of his friends from the party, he saw at least upon this occasion the certainty of finding in him a sure and willing negotiator. He had probably read with attention the works of his new master in politics, and the declaration had not escaped him, that “as to leaders in parties, there is nothing more common

“ than

“ than to see them blindly led ; it is by go-
“ betweens the world is governed : these go-
“ betweens influence the persons with whom
“ they carry on the intercourse, by stating their
“ own sense to each of them as the sense of
“ the other.” And thus indeed they generally
obtain their ends. As long as the Chancellorship was vacant, he could have no doubt
that the ends of the Chief Justice of the Common Pleas would coincide accurately with his
own ; he was sure of his activity ;—and the
general disposition he had at the time to believe every thing Mr. Burke said, gave him
perhaps hopes of the success of such a go-be-
tween.

After some fruitless efforts and vague conversation, however, in which the arts incident to the situation were doubtless not left unpractised by the ingenuity of the negotiator, the attempt proved abortive ; and even the conductor of the negotiation himself seemed to have caught for a moment a little of the principle which those with whom he negotiated then possessed, and declared his unwillingness

unwillingness without their concurrence to accept.

By the Duke of Portland so little attention was paid to it, that almost at the very time a proposition was made, with his concurrence and authority, by a person deservedly high in rank and estimation, for the formation of a new administration *; and so little did Mr. Pitt's friends see any hopes of acquiring new strength, or any certainty of stability, that, it is said, they forced him soon after this to throw aside that affected squeamishness which formerly distinguished his conduct, and accept the Wardenship of the Cinque Ports, as a permanent provision in the event of a reverse of fortune.

But the autumn of this year was replete with more extraordinary events than in the history of man were ever antecedently crowded together in so short a period of time. If those who were avowed enemies, in spe-

* The Duke of Leeds is supposed to have had the honour of submitting this proposal to his Majesty.

culation,

culation, to the French revolution, felt elated when they saw the rapid progress of the allied arms on their entering into France, the subsequent occurrences had tended equally to depress them; and as the exertions of the French made in their defence commanded respect, it was by them dreaded, that their principles would in this country immediately acquire a proportionable admiration. Reason had so far deceived all concerning the events of the campaign, that it became for a time out of fashion to resort to it. Those who formerly represented themselves as fearing that change might lead to stir up an admiration of French principles, and for that reason more than ever disliking reform, now openly avowed their dread of an immediate revolution; and to their imaginations, occupied with the phantom, there was hardly any occurrence that did not appear somehow to portend it: with perfect indifference to the reality of the grounds of their fears, like true zealots, they thought and they harangued alone on the extent of their alarms.

The

The French in the mean time, elated with their success, had wantonly in several instances been guilty of acts which gave us just ground of offence; and the Minister, whilst the feelings and temper of those who had formerly joined him upon the proclamation seemed upon these topics to insure him support, saw the certainty of being able, in consequence of the conduct of France, to produce discussion on the subject.

He now saw a prospect of division, not upon one isolated measure, but upon questions which, as long as they were under discussion, must from their nature form the most important subjects of deliberation, and thus of creating amongst his opponents such a difference, as a man even less experienced in those arts than himself could easily foresee would at least give an opportunity, and furnish ample pretence, for the many who were attached alone by feelings of honour to the party (he had shewn himself so anxious, by division, to destroy), to consult those views of interest which the possession of his situation

situation has taught others as well as himself to believe existed in all.

If the interests of his country had been his only or his principal object ; if he had been alone actuated with a desire to obtain redress for the injury or insult that we or our allies might have suffered ; as there exists no means of obtaining such redress but by addressing ourselves to the power of whom we complain, he would of course have attempted to negociate. Then was not the moment when he would have roused a question about the recognition of the French Republic, which by his conduct he had already decided * ; or when he would have laid such a stress upon the difference betwixt a secret and avowed negotiator—a point which, though it seemed immaterial to us, the nature of their situation, he knew, rendered it impossible for the Provisional Executive Government to get over †. Then was not

the

* See Mr. Fox's Letter to his Constituents.

† In a conversation Mr. Pitt had with M. Maret, the end
of

the time, when he would have stated with such alarm, and shewn such eagerness to resent with acrimony, communications of the French with societies in this country, which he had long suffered unmolested to proceed*. But in pursuit of his favourite object, the division of his opponents and the acquisition of supporters, this was obviously the only line he could pursue. Looking to it he was naturally led to throw such difficulties in the

of November 1792, the latter reports himself to have said,
 " You speak, Sir, of a secret agent. I foresee a difficulty.—
 " You know that in France we profess a great respect for
 " the public opinion, which constitutes the force of free go-
 " vernment, and which is a wholesome restraint on those
 " who govern. This public opinion, however, is ready to
 " demand of the Provisional Executive Council, Why it has
 " had the weakness not to require the recognition of the
 " French Republic by England ? Will it then be possible
 " to treat with you by the means of a secret agent ? We have
 " here a Minister Plenipotentiary, who has all the confidence
 " of our Government."

* See the correspondence of the Constitutional Society with the Convention of France and various Jacobin Clubs, published in London in 1792, where there is to be found an account of the reception of an embassy from the Jacobin Society of Nantes, and a number of letters, of a date much antecedent to this, stronger than any thing that has appeared.

way

way of accommodation, to suspend with as much art as possible negotiation, that the object of difference might be kept up ; and to call Parliament together as soon as possible, that the opportunity of fermenting it by public discussion might occur. Under the laws of the country, it was difficult to meet Parliament so soon as the eagerness in his favourite pursuit rendered desirable; but the object was too big for even the greatest obstacles not to appear insignificant. At any other time he would have been careful of the facts he put into the mouth of his Sovereign ; but to obtain his end, he hesitated not now to issue a proclamation, which, as it gave the first, fortunately gave the last account of any insurrections existing § ; and in consequence of this, Parliament, as the law directs, was immediately summoned.

§ Mr. Grenville, who on the first proclamation supported and still supports Administration, declared, " that nothing that had been mentioned appeared to him by any means equivalent to an insurrection. He was of opinion, that the state of the country was ill described by the proclamation ; and he was the more induced to come forward with this opinion, as he was apprehensive that danger might arise from such exaggeration."

In anticipating the support which he was now sure in Parliament of obtaining, he was not dead to a sense of the necessity of rousing a sudden fermentation in the minds of the people, that they might sympathize with the conduct which his purposes rendered it necessary he should pursue. To introduce any thing like that club government which had been the source of calamity in France seemed a strange and dangerous measure, at a moment when his eloquence was chiefly to be employed in reprobating it. But, in pursuit of his ends, he had become habitually negligent of the consequences of the means : and as he was ready to risque the involving us in war, by the haughty language he held, and the difficulties he artfully created, for the purpose of flattering those in Parliament whose support he courted ; so he was willing to adopt even the hated forms of French anarchy, to force the minds of the people into such a state, as might admit of their sympathizing with those measures, which his intrigue for supporters had induced him so suddenly and rapidly to adopt, that the usual

usual sure but slow channels of influence had not time to effect the change which his security required. Clubs accordingly everywhere appeared, headed by the dependants and established under the influence of Government, and the clamour that was raised soon announced the success of the measure. When Parliament met, the result of his plans was apparent. In the party he wished to break down there existed a marked division; and as the disunion furnished the opportunity, the clamour of the country soon gave encouragement to all those who were withheld only by a slight feeling of honour, to declare their support of his measures. It was then that affected dread of the friends of the unfortunate Brissot producing an apparent neglect of his engagements to his own, gave to the nation a new Chancellor*, and to the Minister additional support. And the successive compliments, which by the Alien Bill, the infractions of the Commercial Treaty, and the ignominiously dismis-

* In the House of Lords, the dread of the friends of Brissot was the satisfactory reason given for his conduct.

sing the Ambassador, he paid to his new supporters, whilst they unfortunately involved us in a war, of which, six months before this opportunity of acquiring strength occurred, he had hardly seen in fifteen years the probability, infured him the promised support even of some of the leaders of the party, at the moment that he was risking the safety of his country to rob them of their strength.

The strong and animated exertions of the small Opposition that remained to promote negociation and secure peace, which undoubtedly then might have been obtained *, were overborne by the strength he had acquired, and drowned in the clamour he had created. And whilst I look back with sor-

* I had at this time frequent opportunities of seeing and talking with many of the leading men in France; and my observation concurs with the account since given by Dumourier, and even with that given by a man supposed to be in the employment of Government, to convince me that there existed not an individual in that country, in possession of any influence, who did not anxiously wish to avoid hostilities with this.

row at the support which Mr. Fox then lost; with pride at the measures he recommended; with astonishment at the success of the intrigue of the Minister for supporters; with grief at the calamities it has occasioned—I cannot help recollecting the criticism of Lord Bacon on the speech of Themistocles the Athenian, which emphatically describes the different excellencies those statesmen exhibited upon this, as they have upon every other occasion. “ Themistocles being de-
“ fired at a feast to touch a lute, said he
“ could not; but yet he could make a small
“ town a great city. These words (holpen
“ a little with a metaphor) may express two
“ different abilities in those that deal in
“ business of state:—for if a true survey be
“ taken of counsellors and statesmen, there
“ may be found, though rarely, those that
“ can make a small estate great, yet cannot
“ fiddle;—as on the other side there will
“ be found a great many that can fiddle
“ very cunningly, but yet are so far from
“ being able to make a small state great, as
“ their gift lies the other way, to bring a
“ great

" great and flourishing state to ruin and de-
 " cay:—and certainly those degenerate arts
 " and shifts, whereby many counsellors and
 " governors gain both favour with their
 " master and estimation with the vulgar,
 " deserve no better name than fiddling."

By the art of Mr. Pitt and the folly of some of its leaders, Opposition was now effectually fiddled out of most of its supporters*; by his conduct and measures the country was involved in war; and thus, without any attempt at, and even by means of carefully avoiding negociation, the different ends of all were attained. The Court saw that party broken down, whose opposition to the system of ruling by secret influence they dreaded, and which it had been the Minister's object at all events to demo-

* When the Duke of Portland called, in the month of February following, a meeting of all those who had formerly acted in the Opposition, to consider the means of opposing the Traitorous Correspondence Bill (which he however afterwards supported), excepting those who with Mr. Fox opposed the war, and some of his Grace's own relations, there was hardly any body attended.

lish.

lish. The Duke of Portland and his friends saw the country involved in that war, in which their alarms foolishly taught them to see the security and prosperity of the nation.

Deprived of their strength, it was in vain that the Duke of Portland, and some few of the leading men with whom he was connected, still to a degree maintained the principle upon which they had acted; that they repeated their aversion to the system upon which administration had been formed, and attributed to that, and the conduct of the ministers, the calamities in which the country was involved; that upon all occasions, both in public and in private, they held out the impossibility of such a coalition*. The opinion

* In the House of Lords, on the Alien Bill, the Duke of Portland declared, that "it was not on account of any personal attachment to the present Administration that he supported it. He could not forget the manner in which they came into power; he could not forget the many circumstances in their conduct by which, in his opinion, they had forfeited all title to the confidence of the nation; he could not forget that to their misconduct many of our present

opinion of the Minister, which they formerly possessed, and even now stated, one would have thought must have taught them, that such declarations could now alone serve as food for his vanity; that he must have looked with delight at the state into which he had reduced them—with joy at the situation in which he had placed himself. If the war was attended with success, he saw himself secure of their support, sure of monopolizing the credit—and, if unfortunately it should be otherwise, he easily must have perceived, from the experience he now had of them, that it would require less management than he had already practised with certainty, to share with them the disgrace

“ present difficulties were owing.”—And in the House of Commons Lord Titchfield, after declaring that his political sentiments and attachments remained the same that they had ever been. “ His opinion of the gentlemen who composed the present Administration was in no respect altered;” stated that “ he could not too explicitly declare, that in no other respect could he give them any share of his confidence, and that he could not too openly avow his attachment to those political principles and connections, with which he had the happiness of entering into public life, and to which it was his sincere wish for ever to adhere.”

and

and divide the responsibility. Ever fond of humbling those with whom he unites, with what pleasure must he have heard those declarations, when he anticipated the additional ignominy that would attend their conduct if ever the hour came when the misfortunes of the country should render a union convenient for him! for he could not doubt but that, at any time, he had them completely in his power; and that a call upon their honour to come forward, and share the responsibility in conducting those measures of which they had in a manner been the authors, even if their inclination for place did not make them grasp at the offer, would probably effect that which however at all events a threat of his retiring was sure to secure.

In the hour of calamity we have accordingly seen them brought forward; and as their folly had already effected a sacrifice of the strength of the party to his art, they have now been forced to offer up the principle of it to his convenience. The term is harsh,
and

and I feel perhaps more in writing it than most of them will in reading it; but whilst truth prevents me from distinguishing betwixt Mr. Eden and the Duke of Portland, I learn, from recollection, that there was a time in which he would have felt it as strongly as myself.

Yet ingenuity itself cannot draw any material distinction; the very principle of the party, as it precluded its dissolution by difference on any particular measure, rendered it impracticable to coalesce with an administration formed on the principle of Mr. Pitt's, even though you agreed with him on subjects of the greatest importance. The cordial support of Mr. Fox on the question of the Slave Trade never had made a union more probable; but if it was otherwise, Lord Auckland would stand armed with his defence as well as the Duke of Portland: and the defence of both is similar; for if the one considers the war as a case of sufficient importance to authorize it, the other may consider the commercial

treaty as such. The language of both conveys the same idea, and is equally repugnant to every principle on which they were united: it makes the stability of connection depend upon the whim, caprice, perhaps the convenience, of individuals, and destroys every ground on which a party can exist.

Such is the manner and such the purposes for which this country has in reality been involved in war; and such are the *means* that have induced some of the leading men of that party, which it had been the object and the pride of Lord Rockingham's life to form, to trample its principles under foot, and thus to give Mr. Pitt an opportunity of completing his triumph over them—who, as he had formerly exhibited Lord Auckland on the treasury bench—now reserved for the head of the Whigs, the more marked humiliation of exhibiting him in that cabinet whose formation he had uniformly deprecated, decorated with that blue ribbon which his Sovereign and the Nation claimed

claimed for Lord Howe, and in possession of that third Secretaryship of State which it had been the boast of his party formerly to reform †.

Thus terminated, in form as well as reality, the existing Whig party: affording, unfortunately for the country, a striking lesson to men of talents and abilities in future, how they lend these inestimable blessings, where political fear may predominate or folly may guide. Happy in domestic life, beloved by their friends, and respected by all, the nominal heads of the party might have long, with credit to themselves, enjoyed the tranquil comforts that fortune and rank could give. But, drawn from their natural sphere, pushed into public notice, raised in the opi-

† In Lord Rockingham's administration, this office was abolished, and an Act of Parliament passed to make it untenable with a seat in the House of Commons. In the person of the Duke of Portland it has been revived, who has lent himself to a miserable evasion of the spirit of the Act, and, though in possession of the department held by Mr. Dundas, has, by accepting the seals that were formerly in the possession of the third Secretary, secured, as they imagine under the letter of the Act, the possibility of Mr. Dundas's remaining in Parliament.

nion of the world by the talents and abilities of those around them—at the moment when these by steadiness and principle saw, in the preservation of the country from the calamities in which it was about to be involved, an ample requital for their past toils—at a time when party became most necessary—some actuated by fear, some by folly, at once annihilated all their fair hopes. By his arts they were induced to throw themselves at the feet of a Minister whom they had reprobated, and by this shameful and disastrous event have for the time, it is to be feared, rendered it equally impossible for the Sovereign on the one hand, or the Public on the other, to resist the calamity of the measures he has, to secure their support, been induced to adopt.

... Of the effects of the war I have already had occasion to state much to you; on the conduct of it, and the increased calamities that are likely in future to attend it, I shall in my next have an opportunity of observing. Of the immediate effect of the dissolution

lution of the Whig party, we have had some small specimens. In the unparalleled provision of the traitorous correspondence bill; in the doctrines held relative to voluntary contributions, and the admitting of foreign troops; in the suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act, we feel its effects. What will be the ultimate consequence it is hardly possible to say; but there is no one can see with indifference—none who have reflected seriously on the nature of the government of this country, without dread, indeed—*party*, the only engine which enabled you to combine all the passions and feelings of men, in aid of public virtue against that prevalent venality generated by the practice of our constitution, so weakened and diminished at a moment when corruption is enabled to make its most dangerous efforts—“when “its modern improved arts, by contracts, “subscriptions, and jobs, is attended with “this perverse and vexatious consequence, “that their benefit is not only unconnected “with that of the nation, but grows under “distress; when those around the Minister

" ster* feed on the expence, and fatten on
 " every extravagance that art and ill con-
 " duct can engrift on the natural disadvan-
 " tages of remote, rash, ill-fated, impolitic
 " and unsuccessful war; and when the Mi-
 " nister's direct interest requires him to
 " pursue a desperate game, and even in
 " self-defence to increase that very expence
 " which is his crime; to entrench himself
 " still deeper in corruption, and by head-
 " long and unmeasured extravagance to
 " have the means of justifying to the faith-
 " ful Commons the events which his plans
 " have occasioned."

There is one consequence, however, which from all this must but too surely follow, more particularly if it is true, that there is at this moment a disinclination to subordination.—As long as public virtue distinguished the Ministers and surrounded the Throne, the libels of a Paine might be re-

* It is believed, that the fees upon the treaties and the commissions have increased the emoluments of some of the Offices of State to an extent of which there is no experience.

garded with indifference; but when the first favours of the Court involve uniformly a dereliction of principle upon the part of the man who receives them, then it is that, if there exists any thing like virtue in the community, it must take from those around the King the regard of the People.—When honours are seldom acquired, but with the loss of character, then it is that they generate contempt more than they command respect.—When public virtue is no longer to be found amongst public men, then it is that public institutions can no longer obtain that reverence the welfare of the community requires.

The situation of affairs, in whatever point of view they are considered, offers, it must be acknowledged, but a melancholy and gloomy prospect to the eye. It cannot be supposed, that a person can feel otherwise than in a degree disgusted with all political pursuits, when he reflects that those he had for years fondly hoped would have been the instruments of the salvation of the country, have

have been the means of bringing it into its present situation—when he knows not whether most to deplore the reduction, and in a manner the annihilation of the party he has supported, or the fatal effects of the measures to which its destruction has led. There remains to me, however, one satisfaction, that of thinking that as an individual I have conducted myself firmly, honestly, and conscientiously. Prudently for my personal views, in the sense of the word arising out of the corruption of the country, I pretend not to have acted; by the dictates of sound wisdom it would be presumption in me to say I have been guided; but to the merit of consistency I must put in my claim; and I may venture, I think, to assert, that what was in me the effect of early conviction, has been now for many years the uniform source of my political action.

In that line I must persevere:—reduced as the party with which I act is in numbers, still I for one shall never despair: in the justice of our cause I feel our strength; in

the talents and abilities of those with whom I have the honour to act, our main support.

It is our object to recover to this country the blessings of tranquillity and peace; we wish to put an end to the irritation of the public mind; we look with anxiety to the restitution of the mild practice of English law; we wish not to hazard the blessings we enjoy in a contest with what we are taught to consider the miseries of France.

To obtain these points, however desirable and necessary for the country, may be difficult, but I trust not impossible; the public mind must in time be undeviated; reflection must operate a change in the opinions of men; it cannot be long ere the people will begin to think what they can gain! and what they may lose!

Southend, October 7, 1794.

LETTER

LETTER III.

I HAVE already laid before you what appear to me to have been the real causes of our present unfortunate situation; I have submitted to your consideration the principles that, in my mind, have guided the conduct of Ministers; and I have endeavoured to shew you, that no regard to the public, but an attention to private and particular interests, has led us on from step to step to the present scene of accumulated distresses. It now remains to give you a view, of our present and future prospects; and as I have explained my past, so will I now shortly consider what must be my future line of political conduct, which, as it is guided chiefly by principle, no change of circumstances can materially affect, and no unforeseen occurrence can greatly alter. Easy and simple indeed will this last task prove, when compared with the difficulty of conjecturing any possible mode in which

the present Ministers can with honour extricate themselves or their country from the unheard-of and unsurmountable calamities in which we are involved. The prosperity of the country might perhaps under different men, and by pursuing different measures, still be preserved; but for Ministers to undo every thing they have done, to unsay all they have asserted for these last two years, is impracticable; to disentangle themselves from the trammels of their own toils, simply impossible. Of any change, however, there is at present no appearance; with a superior degree of art and subtily the Ministers have made common cause between themselves and the country; they have hitherto succeeded in dragging both into the same labyrinth, and the future condition of this once powerful kingdom is now only to be learnt by an investigation of those principles that are most likely to actuate the conduct of its Ministers.

This consideration then is of the gravest import, and it becomes us much, seriously
to

to reflect upon the different motives that will probably influence the various springs that are likely to give elasticity to the future operations of the component parts of the present administration.

That terror of innovation, and dread of the extension of French principles, have from the beginning of the present contest uniformly guided the policy of Burlington-House and its adherents, is a fact that I presume no one will attempt to controvert. Fear then is evidently the cause from which they have acted. The effect it has produced is the war with France. And it of course naturally follows, that, as with the successes of France the original cause will increase, so, as their fears gain strength, their avidity for war must proportionably augment; a dreadful situation indeed, placing us in this singular dilemma, that, when peace becomes indispensably necessary, then shall our executive government be most fixed in their determination to continue the war; when the ability no longer exists of carrying it on

at

at all, then shall we resolve to carry it on with the greatest vigour. As fear acts upon individuals, so must this political terror ultimately act upon the state ; for if in attempting to escape a danger we frequently plunge headlong into it, so, upon their own principles, if they persevere in their present conduct, what they regard as the means of their safety must become the agent of their destruction.

Fatal, however, as the operation of this principle must ever prove, by it they have been solely guided, and, true to their fears alone, they first deserted every former connexion, and at length have involved themselves in a situation where the assertion of any constitutional principle would be in itself nugatory and ridiculous. So long as they gave an independent support to government, they might, with consistency, resist any measure they conceived to have an unconstitutional tendency. Their support of the war might be uniform, and their regard to constitutional principles at the same time maintained;

maintained ; but from the moment they went into office, they at once placed themselves in the power of the Minister. To strengthen his hands, to enable him to carry on the war with additional vigour, they came into place ; to resign upon their own grounds afterwards is impossible, in as much as by weakening the executive government they act against their only remaining principle for which all others have already been abandoned. To affect independence would therefore be absurd. They cannot be blind to their situation ; they must feel that the Minister still holds in his hands the powerful means by which he forced them with humiliation into office, and that a repetition of its exertion must at any time reduce them to passive obedience.

In the prosecution of the war alone, they can have a voice ; in every other point, on every other subject, the mandate of Mr. Pitt must be the rule of their conduct.

But is this mere speculation ? Do we not already see a complete proof of this position
in

in the difficulty they have found of carrying through the stipulations they made previous to accepting office? It is needless to enter into the pitiful negotiation for personal honours to be conferred on himself or friends: these, if the Duke of Portland could condescend to bargain for, at a moment of such magnitude, the Minister would naturally and readily grant; it jarred not with his interests, it flattered perhaps his hopes of expeling them.—But let us attend to the great point his Grace is said to have stipulated for—the government of Ireland. That he should feel it desirable and fitting, in the moment of deserting his own political friends in England, to demand a similar sacrifice from Mr. Pitt of his friends in Ireland, is not astonishing: that he who had yielded the uncontrouled sway in Great Britain to the Minister, should wish to possess similar power in Ireland, is most natural; and that he understood it to be given up to him, is most certain.

How far this stipulation will ever be completely carried into effect, it is impossible to foresee:

foresee: but as the negotiations concerning it have, for months past, exhibited one of the most ridiculous and disgusting scenes that has, even in the present æra, marked the history of the country *, so the ultimately conceding a reluctant half shews in the strongest point of view the complete inca-

* It has not been the least entertaining of the many singular occurrences that now daily happen, to have observed the progress of this difference betwixt the Duke of Portland and Mr. Pitt. Their adherents on both sides have with equal obstinacy asserted, on the one hand that the original stipulation was acquiesced in, and the certainty of resignation, unless it is carried into effect, has been publicly avowed: on the other, that the whole has proceeded from mistake; and the Minister's correspondence with Lord Westmorland is brought forward to cheer the hopes of his adherents in Ireland. We have seen Mr. Secretary Douglas making arrangements for resuming his situation, at the moment another person was accepting his place from the Duke of Portland; we have seen Earl Fitzwilliam preparing to go, Lord Westmorland determined to stay. It is now, however, confidently said, that Lord Fitzwilliam is to go, and that Mr. Pitt has preserved his friends in their situations; an arrangement as little calculated to satisfy expectant Chancellors, &c. at Burlington-House, as it is to afford a permanent security for any substantial change of principle in the government of Ireland.—Is it to be supposed that Lord Fitzwilliam can have any real confidence in Lord Fitzgibbon and his friends, or that Mr. Burne and Mr. Keogh can ever receive any boon, however desirable in itself, with complacency from that quarter?

pacity

pacity of the adherents of Burlington-House now to demand or enforce any thing.

From this quarter, then, the country have nothing to expect; in vain do they look for any prospect of a restoration of tranquillity; the operation of alarm is their only source of action, and the effect of that operation necessarily involves a disregard and neglect of every other principle and opinion whatsoever.

In contemplating the Minister, and the probable line the motives that have regulated his conduct will induce him to pursue, our hopes are equally gloomy. Guided more, as I have stated at length in my last letter, by personal motives than any other cause, and having succeeded beyond his most fanguine expectation in the object of his solicitude; having divided the party he dreaded; having placed himself at the head of that aristocracy he originally trampled on, and in some degree deserted the cause of those who originally contributed to placing

placing him in power; is it to be imagined he will easily forego what he has taken such pains to acquire, or that he will soon relinquish what he has purchased at so dear a rate?

To effect his original purpose, he sacrificed the peace of the kingdom; and to retain the personal benefit he derived from it, a continuation of the sacrifice is necessary. Great as the price is that one party pays to him, he too must yield somewhat to them. If they sacrifice to him the constitution, he must concede to them the peace of the country. Such is exactly the tenor of their bond —the country between both is totally forgotten; and to gratify the inordinate ambition of one party, to quiet the feminine dreads of another, the obvious interests of the community are to be neglected, our best blood and last treasure expended, and the sad calamities of lengthened war heaped on this devoted nation.

But to this line of conduct other considerations must equally lead the Minister and his

his friends ; for, similar as the contest is in many other points to the American, in this it is most fatally alike—that at the commencement of both we equally out-stepped every fair and considerate bound of discretion, by declaring at once the only terms on which peace could be re-established. There, unconditional submission was to be insisted on; here, the overturning of the Jacobin government is asserted. I speak not now of the supreme folly of the idea in either instance ; but I should have thought that the experience of the fatal consequences that attended the practice of it on the former occasion, would have rendered the adoption of it on the latter impossible.

In the grave hour of considering the probable issue of uncertain war, calmness and resolution mark the conduct of a wise Minister; he elevates not his own expectation, or that of his country, beyond the well founded hopes arising from present vigour and immediate exertion; in them he sees the only source and sure road to returning

ing tranquillity and an advantageous peace; he asserts not what must depend on accident, but endeavours to act so as to come up to the expectation of the most sanguine. Intemperance and passion for no part of his character, they give no sway to his conduct: unfortunately however for us, whether through mistaken policy or weakness, these have now for two wars been our sole guides. In both, the Ministers began where they ought to have concluded; in both, they looked not for success as generating an end, but stated the end to which they were to bring their success; and in both, they, unhappily for the country, early pledged their personal character and reputation to points probably impossible to be attained, and certainly at all events out of the power of man to insure.

The conquest of France, or the counter-acting by arms the declared will of twenty-five millions of men in a state of revolutionary enthusiasm, might have appalled the boldest politicians. They, however, in proportion

proportion to the magnitude of the object, instead of caution, one would conceive from their conduct, have judged rashness necessary. Pledges were to be made—hopes held out to delude and deceive the people, who ultimately, through the vice of the Government and the arts of the Minister, dragged him to support his chimerical ideas, irritated by declamation, and maddened by an appeal to the passions, brought themselves to imagine they saw, in the greatness of the attempt, a sure proof of the talents of the projector—in the vastness of the idea, a certainty of genius adequate to its completion. Miserably indeed have they been deceived: our ability to carry it on—our Minister's adequacy to conducting it, are now before the public. But the melancholy folly of this our original conduct cannot now be got the better of. Whatever may be our situation, our pride and our honour still urge us forward; our Minister's character and reputation are at stake; and, to save our own and his credit, whatever may now be our opinion of the impossibility of success, new treasure

treasure is to be spent, and more blood spilt.

When in the mind of every thinking man the American war was desperate, what, from the situation in which Lord North had placed himself and the public, was the consequence? New expectation was to be raised, and different measures pursued. This General was to be sacrificed, and some new plan to be adopted. The public hopes were by these means flattered; the people found a temporary relief from the consciousness of their own follies; till at last experience taught them this fatal lesson, that all Generals were alike, that every plan was equally ruinous, the original attempt was in the eye of reason ridiculous, and every subsequent effort proved but the truth of that which wisdom ought at first to have taught them. At present, too fatal a resemblance appears; from similar causes similar effects are ensuing. Generals may be changed, measures may be varied; but the ultimate end of the fatal delusion will too surely be found in aggravated

aggravated disappointment and additional failure.

To carry it on, however, is for Mr. Pitt's personal character necessary; in him every feeling must lead to the desperate prosecution of it: he knows that nothing short of ruin can apologize for his treating; and even to the ruin of his country he must now look for the preservation of his character and his continuance in power.

But let us not, even in this last stage of calamity, flatter ourselves;—in his conscious incapacity to treat, we may anticipate with melancholy certainty the sure cause of protracted hostility: the habit of sacrificing principle to convenience may indeed induce the Minister to make a piece of miserable patch-work of his character; but he, and those connected with him, must see that every consideration of policy and wisdom precludes the possibility of his treating with success. The instant he makes the attempt by analysing his political character as a man, and

and his conduct as a minister, the whole of our situation will stand unveiled to our enemy. They must know that necessity, not choice, dictates the measure. They must feel that want of ability to carry on the war, and not a wish to re-establish tranquillity, leads to the proposal; they must see that fear of them, and not love of peace, actuates his conduct. In the very proposal they will best discern the extent of their victories; in the past language and conduct of ministers they will alone be able to form a commensurate view of their present strength, and our humiliation. It would be laying the country at the feet of France, and stating in the plainest characters, that any terms must be accepted, because no resistance could any longer be made.

But we cannot suppose the French so blind in their discernments, as not to have marked the political character of the man: it requires not their ingenuity to discover that the depth of his necessitous submission will be proportionate to the extent of his origi-

nal arrogance and folly. Can we believe for a moment, that they are so lost to the remembrance of even his recent policy, as not to observe, that in the conduct of the wary Empress of the North there is a rule and a guide laid down for their adoption? In treating with him, will they not imagine that it is but to refuse, and new concessions must be made? that it is only to deny, and fresh submission must ensue? The sacrifice of character, and of what he stated to be the interest of the nation, *to her*, will insure the concession of our dearest interests *to them*; and if in the year 1791, to preserve his place, the Minister made light of the honour of his country—when he attempts to treat, in the situation to which he has now reduced us, he will learn the consequence of such conduct, by the solid and calamitous sacrifices he will be obliged to make—sacrifices not made more to necessity, than to his past and present impolicy and ambition. It will unfortunately, however, not be even necessary for them to look back to this memorable event; it is the nature of man

man to demand what he conceives would have been asked; and in the submissions that Mr. Pitt would have forced upon France, we may form a competent judgment of the terms that he will have it in his power to make.

Whether then we consider the Ministers in a body, or look at their separate views as dictating their general conduct, there appears not in either case the smallest chance of peace; and when we reflect on the futility of the grounds on which they and their adherents maintain the necessity of war, as it convinces us of their determination to persevere, so it shews equally the personal motives and views that actuate them.

In the present state of things, to hold out even a remote chance of ultimate success is totally impossible. *With whom are you to treat?* is therefore the great point to which they resort—wisely, I grant, for their purposes—though its solution is easily forced back upon themselves by the simple ques-

tion, *With whom are you at war?* And if there are any to whom this can appear not completely conclusive, let them for a moment reflect *For what we are at war.* Avowedly for the destruction of the Jacobin government of France. The very acknowledgment of our object is then a complete answer to the question. If we once confess that we cannot obtain our end, it involves the natural conclusion, that the dissolution of a government being the end, and it having failed, a government remains with whom we may treat. But our object is stated to be, to destroy, not to form a government. Looking then, if we can, to a successful termination, the fact will whimsically be, that when we have attained the object of our pursuit, then, and then only, shall we be exactly in the situation in which it is now stated to be impracticable for us to treat; and the only time we shall have nothing to treat with at all, will be the very moment when, according to the statement of Ministers, peace ought to be made—their object in the war being attained.

Beyond

Beyond this doctrine of destroying the present government, Ministers have never yet ventured to go: nor for their purposes was it necessary; for it must be obvious to every one, if they were to succeed in that object, peace could not be made till a new government was formed;—in its formation, they who destroyed the last must of course have a leading share: and thus, had they succeeded, at the very close of the war, though Ministers from the first never dared to avow their original and true object, it would have ultimately resulted as the natural consequence of the measures they pursued. The farce of overturning a government would have been dropped to the ground, and the plan of forcing a government on a people struggling for freedom in *their* idea, and determined to be free, would stand forward in all its original and native deformity.

But the disgust naturally excited in every generous bosom by many of the recent scenes in France, a horror at those who were the
actors

actors on that bloody theatre, and an apprehension of a diminution of our dignity as a people, should we treat with a Jacobin Banditti, as it is called, as they contributed to involve us, have, I am well aware, come much in aid of this strange and absurd difficulty. How far our own conduct may have in part occasioned the very scenes we deplore, and the very horrors we deprecate, I have avoided entering upon; but I should wish those in whom humanity takes such a lead, who feel so much for the distresses of a foreign country, to look a little to our domestic situation; to consider to what a continuation of the struggle must tend; to think of the effect of increasing burthens; to reflect on the loss morality must suffer; to contemplate the gloomy scenes the Continent daily exhibits; and then let them decide, whether a spirit of hatred and revenge against the French Government should in wisdom induce us to be cruel to ourselves; and whether a detestation of their barbarity should in prudence guide us to ultimate misery, and possibly to final ruin.

To

To those dignified persons who may wish to sacrifice every solid benefit to false pride, let me be permitted to put this common question—With whom did you treat in the American war? And they must answer with me,—*With proscribed Rebels and a vagabond Congress.* Let them go a little further back, and they will find (pride and arrogance yielding to necessity and policy) the haughty and insolent bigot of Spain, at the very moment of canonizing the murderer of one of the greatest and best Princes Europe ever saw, forego the object of his early ambition by a virtual declaration of the independence of the United Provinces. Let them reflect that, in both those memorable instances, the language was the same ; ideas similar to those of the present day at both periods prevailed. Let experience be their guide, and let them then determine, whether, to support a standard of ideal consequence, they are willing to hazard the continuation of the miseries of war, and the bloodshed of thousands. But this unsurmountable bar to peace has always appeared to me to originate

nate

nate from a very different, though obvious cause. Whenever success became doubtful, the mind was naturally led to look forward to peace; the ostensible difficulty, *With whom can you treat?* was then artfully brought forward, but in reality only as a veil to the real consideration of *Who in this country can treat with advantage to the nation, and honour to themselves?* Here at once you find a solution of all their clamour—an explanation of the whole of the difficulty.—To keep back this last consideration, the first must be rendered in the minds of the people unconquerable. When once you get over it, the anxiety for peace will be augmented by the road to it becoming apparent; but either the character and consistency or the power of the Minister must be annihilated. To preserve both will then be impossible; for if the wish of the people be once with energy expressed, and he refuses to treat, there is an end of the last. If he consents to make peace, he bids adieu to the first: one of them he must give up. But extinguish from the memory of all, the past

past promises and pledges; blot from the recollection of the public, the conduct Mr. Pitt and his adherents have adopted; enable them to treat, reserving their places and power, with that scanty pittance of consistency and character still necessary for public men; give them but the most distant opportunity of answering the question, *Who can treat?* by saying, *We can*; the weight of the first difficulty will in their estimation instantly sink to the ground; this formidable bar to our happiness will disappear; and those who in the hour of arrogance were ever readiest to calumniate and revile, would, in the moment of ultimate misfortune, be the first to acknowledge and to treat with the present government of France:

In further support of this doctrine; a doubt of the existing rulers in that country treating with you is constantly insinuated; a point that in all similar situations must ever remain doubtful till the experiment be made. And why it should not now succeed

as

as well as in any former war, I own I am at a loss to see. That they have anxiously courted peace since hostilities commenced, the public are aware of; and that they would not now treat we have no reason to suppose, unless, judging of them by ourselves, we conceive them to be guided by similar prejudices, by the same aversion to our government that we have professed to theirs; and by like interested motives on the part of those who take the lead in the management of their affairs.

But even allowing it to be true, it can be no reason for not making the attempt: —by that, if made with dignity, we can suffer no loss. It may indeed be humiliating to make peace on disgraceful terms; but it never can be disgraceful to offer peace on honourable terms. If it fails, all doubt of the right in the contest is at an end; it gives us the aid of certain justice and necessity, and the very failure will give new strength to our measures—new vigour to our arms.

But this supposition of aversion to peace is in fact another mode of diverting the mind from the impossibility of the present Ministers' offering to treat. It is not the reason of the thing, but the necessity of supporting it for their own purposes, that leads them to urge this preposterous doubt.

Not only therefore the separate and united interests of the Ministers, but the very difficulties they start, must lead us to the melancholy conviction, that it is their desperate determination to prosecute the war to the last extremity. To continue it with success under the present circumstances of things, cannot, I am convinced, be supported by any considerate or reflecting person. It is a dream perhaps reserved for the warm and juvenile imagination of those who have so frequently anticipated the glory of the Allies in the capture of Paris. With them however I shall not contend. If they can bring themselves still to credit the possibility of our carrying on the contest with a chance of advantage, their inveterate obstinacy

nacy may be a matter of astonishment to some: but it must ultimately be a subject of grief to all, that, in a time of imminent danger and public distress, the rash and ill-digested chimeras of such politicians should, for a moment, from their personal connections, and the support they have met with in Parliament, be suspected to bear any affinity to the matured judgment of the responsible Ministers of the country.

Of the people whatever may be the sentiments, they will now be but slowly and with difficulty expressed. Accustomed for years to have a strong party in the country ready to support their interests and to forward their views, in its dissolution they have found, to their cost, the loss of their own energy and of their own strength. They must naturally be diffident in proportion to the weakness of those who support them; and when they look on one hand to the apparent strength of Ministers, on the other to the desperate domestic uses made of it, necessity and prudence equally lead them to

to be silent.—From the small but steady and concentrated body of men who in either House of Parliament still venture to oppose the measures of the Minister, little can be immediately hoped for. Theirs indeed is a difficult task. Influence, corruption, calumny, fear, prejudice, and pride, are all acting against them in their fullest vigour, and to the greatest extent. Steady, persevering, and determined, they will no doubt shew themselves to their purpose; but remote and distant is the cure they unaided by the public voice can administer.

There appears therefore no where any cheering gleam of immediate hope, that flatters us with a possible cessation of the present calamities, or gives a prospect of returning tranquillity. When we investigate the feelings and view the conduct of his Majesty's present Ministers, we unfortunately see with great certainty, that nothing but a continuation of hostilities is to be expected: in them, honour, interest and prejudice combine to push on the contest.

For

For this then we must make up our minds, and it is most necessary we should arm ourselves with fortitude and resolution. Every man must feel, that by this perseverance we risk our own fate; that in endeavouring to overturn the anarchy of France we hazard the fair form of our own constitution. Every one must be convinced, that the efforts of France are alone to be repelled by means equally powerful.—We may turn the commander in chief of our army into an auctioneer of military commissions, and so add to our number when we diminish the real strength of our establishment; we may levy the annual supply, by entailing beggary and wretchedness on our posterity; we may go on debauching the morals of the country by turning the minds of the industrious to military pursuits; we may continue to encourage unconstitutional benevolences; we may go on addressing the Crown, and promising support; our Ministers may vent their impotent Philippics in parliament, and mutilated Gazettes may be sent forth to cheer the finking spirits of the country. But let

let us not deceive ourselves. Such and other ordinary means will be as impotent, as unavailing. The military character of all Europe already lies prostrate at the feet of French Enthusiasm, and till we employ means similar to those they have adopted resistance will be useless. To repel their armies, similar armies must be found ; to resist their force, similar force must be produced. Let us therefore not completely shut our eyes to our real situation. If war is to be prosecuted, to make it successful French means must be pursued. Let us not talk of our Constitution ; for before we can act on equal terms with them it must be in substance destroyed ; every man must by compulsion become a soldier ; every shilling of individual property must become public stock ; our lives and fortunes must be in a state of requisition ; and the British Cabinet must become a Committee of Public Safety.

From such efforts only are we to look for success ; but to such, thank God ! even Mr. Pitt cannot resort. But are we still to be
dragged

dragged on, every military judge in Europe having declared the impossibility of success? Deserted by many of those powers originally most sanguine in the cause, are we to continue parrying in the best manner we can the fatal blows of our enemies; consoling ourselves in the ultimate reflection, that a branch of the sea divides us from the Continent; and losing sight of Holland, that miserable country we have ruined with our protection? In this undoubtedly our Ministers may persevere; but if they do, we cannot but suspect they look for their safety to the approach of the melancholy period when all other considerations must be set aside, when all political prejudices must be forgot, when the preservation of our own country must be our sole object; when, to protect our fortunes and families, every exertion must be made, every human means employed.— Should this melancholy but not improbable situation occur, I am completely ready to grant it is no time to start difficulties with whom you will act, or to enter into considerations of former political conduct. We must

must all act, and act together ; but to learn who is then fittest to guide the last and desperate efforts of our country, we must necessarily turn our eyes to the past conduct of Ministers in their military capacity, and from that determine how far they are to be trusted at a moment when insufficiency or neglect must end in sealing the fate of this powerful kingdom. If no part of our present situation be owing to their misconduct ; if all our failures have been the natural result of obvious causes ; if they have been all along the wise and watchful but unfortunate servants of the public ; in that case I am ready to allow, at a moment such as I have stated they ought particularly to be supported. But if any part of this situation arises from their neglect, if it originates from their folly or want of foresight, we should be committing the worst of suicides any longer to confide in them. And as this is a point of much and deep import to our future preservation, I hope I may be pardoned if I submit to you, with the diffidence due by one not versant in military affairs, a short view of their past military conduct.

P

There

There is no failing so great, and at the same time possibly so common in this country, as the inclination we generally feel to undervalue the character of our enemies. The principle from which this feeling arises, however much in itself commendable, has, in its effects, unfortunately but too often proved fatal to our military success; and of this the American war is a true but melancholy example. It then actuated alike the army and the senate, our ministers and our generals, our councils and our executive operations. It has recorded in history the British parliament applauding the absurdity of overcoming a continent with a handful of grenadiers*. It occasioned the attack at Bunker's Hill; for to take a fair military advantage of the rebels was, by our generals there, reckoned impolitic and unnecessary f.

It

* Vide General Grant's speech in the House of Commons.

† It must be generally known that the works at Bunker's Hill were thrown up in one night, on a peninsula. The possession of the pass naturally ensured the surrender of the troops occupying that post, in the course of two days at farthest;

It then uniformly guided all our councils; and not even the first and severe lesson we received at Boston could hinder us from attempting the disastrous attack of Charlestowm, the subsequent expedition under General Burgoyne, or the last and decisive enterprise of the Marquis Cornwallis. The history of that war is a recital of expedients to remedy unforeseen events; the history of the government of that day is a tale of accumulated disappointment proceeding from unfair and arrogant expectation. The ministers and their generals raised an imaginary standard of the energy of the people against whom they were to act; and their plans were formed against this phantom of their own creation, and not against that

theft; and the circumstance of our being enabled to attack it with the tide in our favour, by means of the very boats we afterwards landed from, gave the most complete security to the attempt. But the appearance of management was supposed to convey the idea of fear. An inhabitant of America, even behind works, and fighting for liberty, never could be imagined to resist our regular troops. They were attacked in their strongest point, and the event is matter of public notoriety.

great, powerful, and temperate continent with which they were contending.

Recent as this example is; deeply as we felt the effects of that system of acting; much as it has been deprecated by some of the heads of the present government, I cannot help thinking that the whole of the conduct of the present war arises from the same fountain; that under-rating our enemies' military character and exertions has been the source of all our calamities; that judging of them by an imaginary and not a real standard has been the cause of all our failures; and that estimating the strength and resources of the French, not by what they really were, but by what we wished them to be, has been the origin of all our difficulties, and of our present ruinous situation. In vain may we turn round for any semblance of system or plan since the beginning of the war; in vain may we look for any appearance of calm deliberation and systematic energy in the cabinet:—of hurry and confusion we have sufficient proofs; of inadequate expedients

expedients to remedy unforeseen disasters, examples sufficient; but of system or of plan, the bread and staff of war, not a vestige is to be seen.

The situation of the French in Holland at the commencement of the war, might, I am ready to grant, render an immediate exertion for the relief of that country necessary; and the exigency of the case might fairly be allowed to preclude any possibility of concerting a fixed and settled plan for the ensuing campaign. Aid was accordingly sent, too trifling indeed to ensure any thing but ruin, had it been the only hope of our ally: shortly after, however, and most fortunately, the victorious arms of Clairfayt and the Prince of Cobourg drove the French within the limits of their own territory; which was in fact, to us, the fair and legitimate end of one war, and the subsequent operations the commencement of another.

The consideration of what was the surest and speediest mode of making a solid impression

pression in the interior of France, must at this period have become the sole object of military investigation in the cabinet; the necessity of defence was at an end, and offensive measures to be immediately adopted. Here a variety of points were to be taken into view. The nature of our continental connections was of importance to be considered; the real situation of our enemy, and the exact means we had to apply to any given end, were equally points most carefully to be attended to,

The number of our alliances at this time must, I presume, have solely depended on our wish to extend them. All the states of Europe saw with jealousy, most with horror, and not a few with fear, the changes that had lately taken place in France; and when they contemplated the military array of Austria and Prussia in the field, to declare positively against her was by them too generally, at that time, considered as merely giving way to their feelings, and partaking of certain success. The state of our enemy, too, certainly

certainly held out prospects flattering in the highest degree to our wishes. The fate of the unfortunate Louis had already marked the downfall of the timid but enlightened Brissotin ministry; every day they were drawing nearer to their end; and the violence of their adversaries for a time apparently precluded all appearance of union and combination. The seeds of civil war were spread throughout France, and daily scenes of carnage and murder were for months exhibited in the richest plains of that delightful climate. Their army too was completely disorganized; the despondency of defeat had succeeded to the animation of victory; their favourite General had proved himself a traitor to their cause; all confidence and energy was completely annihilated; even the appearance of an army in the field hardly anywhere existed. Our own means, it must be allowed, were, as they always have been at the commencement of every war, inadequate to any very extensive scale of operation; but if our troops were few in numbers, they were still formidable from the discipline

pline of the men, and the experience of our officers. Under these circumstances two different systems might have been adopted; the one, to join the British army to that of Prince Cobourg, which already with our subsidized mercenaries was about to act on the northern frontier of France; the other, to have, in conjunction with our fleet, employed the whole of our force on the coast of France.

The experience of past wars taught, one naturally would have imagined, to have made in favour of the last; much and serious alarm had frequently been given to the French government by expeditions of the kind; and the necessity of protecting their own shore has frequently tended to stop the progress of their successful arms, even in the centre of Germany. The internal convulsions in France seemed to point out the obvious propriety of this line of acting: nor could it be imagined that those only would forget to give due weight to this leading point, who were constantly cheering the hopes

hopes of the country by inflammatory declamation on this head. Yet such seems really to have been the case. What ought to have stimulated Ministers to an invasion of France had no weight; and, instead of attempting thus to give energy to the opinion of the disaffected, they appear to have come to the resolution of despising all opinion, even when in their favour, and of trusting to the desperate issue of arms only for their success. The smallness of the body of English troops has been stated as a reason for the line they adopted; the insufficiency of the national force, at that period, to any great undertaking formed their principal defence. But it is clear that this is entirely a question of a comparative nature, and here the very smallness of the force appears to make against their position.

That a limited service can only be expected from a small body, must be granted; but it is also obvious, that in an army of a certain magnitude the addition of a small corps

corps is hardly perceptible; whereas a small corps acting separately, and with appropriate energy, has frequently rendered essential service even to the large army.—The question therefore seems to stand thus: Whether the small force that could be provided was of greatest use by joining the large army of the Prince de Cobourg? or, Whether, by acting separately with our fleet, it would not in fact have given greater strength to that very army? Whether ten thousand men hovering or landing on the coast of France, would not have forwarded that General's views more than they did by acting with him? and, Whether, above all, it would not only have aided his views, but would have tended, if any thing could, to produce a revolution of opinion, from which principally early peace was to be looked for, out of which chiefly returning tranquillity was to be expected?—I would ask too, which way our troops, excellent as I allow them to be, were likely to act with greatest effect, under the protecting influence of our commanding navy, or as a corps in a German army?

army? Whether as an English army commanded by English generals, and acting solely for British interests, or as a German corps acting for interests by them little understood, and possibly less relished? Whether, in short, from our own troops most was naturally to be expected, when the fruits of their victories were to benefit their country, and their laurels to adorn the son of their Sovereign; or when the benefit of their labours was to be shared by German states, and divided among German despots?

All these considerations had, however, no effect at this period on the British Cabinet: a different mode of procedure was adopted, different measures pursued; the moment for such an undertaking was for ever lost: and though at a future period, and under less favourable circumstances, we have been told (with what truth is now pretty clear) the attempt was to be made—still, at the time when alone it held out a rational prospect of success, no such measure was adopted.

It

It indeed may be matter of well-grounded doubt, whether the rapid success of the Prince of Cobourg in driving the enemy within their own dominion had not elated the expectation of Ministers to an extent that rendered in their minds all plan and system totally unnecessary; and whether they did not resolve to follow that General's foot-steps, as the sure road to easy conquest, and to certain fame. Their tone and manner at the time strongly corroborate this idea; nor will the reflecting part of the community hereafter be much astonished at the military inefficiency of those Ministers, who could have the folly and frontless audacity to state at the beginning of their career, that the fact of the embarkation of 1900 men of the guards had given a turn to the situation of Europe*.

But whether it was occasioned by the ef-

* It was broadly asserted, by high authority, in both Houses of Parliament, that the landing of the Guards had been attended with the effect I have mentioned; but the fact is, the original victory of the Austrians took place previous to their disembarkation.

fect of ill-founded expectation of immediate success, or whether it proceeded from what I shall ever conceive a most fatal error in a matured plan, we know the truth to be, that the British force in Holland, reinforced from England, joined the allied army, and the offensive campaign against France soon opened by the blockade of Condé, and the siege of Valenciennes. How far this ought to have been made the leading object of the campaign, and whether Lille would not have been a preferable point of attack, involves a mere military question of detail, into which I shall not presume to enter.

The army had been directed to act in conjunction with the Austrian force. If any blame lay in the conduct of that force (which I am far from asserting), it belonged to the executive officers exclusively, and cannot in any fairness be attributed to our Ministers.

Our object, however, such as it was, completely succeeded. The allied army remained united

united and compact, nor was it long before the gallantry of our own troops, headed by the Duke of York, in pushing the siege of Valenciennes, and the military skill displayed by the Prince de Cobourg in frustrating all the feeble attempt made to throw succour into either place, gave us possession of both these important towns.

But here unfortunately ended, by an immediate change of the system previously adopted, not only the success of the campaign, but of the war in Europe. Hitherto it had appeared to the military officers entrusted with the command of the army, that acting together in one large compact body was the only line by which either security or success could be relied on. They had adopted it at a time when the French army was disorganised and disaffected; nor can it for a moment be supposed, that, in proportion as their opponents acquired additional strength from their increasing numbers, and fresh confidence in new generals, they should deviate

deviate from the precautionary wisdom of their former policy.

We must therefore look to some other quarter for this fatal change; and we are naturally led to turn our eyes to the Cabinet of that country which was to derive the exclusive benefit of the measure. It was now the conduct of our Ministers began to appear in its true colour. Infatuated with past success, there was no undertaking too desperate for them to hazard, no scheme too daring for them to undertake. The matured experience of the commanders was disregarded, and to the rashness of their speculations was the success of the war, and the safety of our army, to be sacrificed. They even thought all common official exertion to give effect to the ruinous measures they were concerting, completely unnecessary; and though they must have felt that in proportion to the celerity of the execution the brilliancy of the scheme would appear; though the necessary stores for the siege were meant to be furnished by themselves; yet.

yet they were as slow in their preparations to give it effect at home, as they were rash in enforcing its execution abroad. The consequence of such conduct at the time was easily foreseen—the fate of the expedition against Dunkirk was early predicted*. Their plan was, however, by the commander reluctantly adopted; the allied army divided; and, after delays of various kinds, as unpardonable in the executive as in the deliberative character of our Ministers, the events ensued which are of too painful a nature for me to insist upon.

It is not in history to afford a stronger instance of the principle I originally laid down. A complete misunderstanding of the force and energy of their enemy, the undervaluing their means and exertion, must have led to the destructive attempt. They have in their defence held out the idea of being overpowered by a mass, but the fact does

* I myself heard the officer to whom this country during the present war probably owes most, on seeing the nature of the position the Duke of York was under the necessity of taking, from the inadequacy of his force, predict the event.

not

not bear them out*. No troops acted against them that they had not grounds to fear might be brought into the field for that purpose. They have attempted too to assert, that even the failure at Dunkirk in-

* The original decree of rising in a mass was presented to the Convention the 23d of August; the defeat of the covering army at Dunkirk took place the 6th of September. Between these two periods it is evidently impossible it could have been carried into execution, so as to produce any effect. But the doctrine of mass is a general apology for all our disasters. How far it is in itself true, I have always had some doubts. That their armies are numerous we well know; that they have fought with success we have all to deplore; but on the long run, I rather apprehend, it will be found that those furious and undisciplined hordes of Sans Culottes are simply large, alert and disciplined armies, and that their fury is the effect of courage combined with a love of, and a sense of duty to, their country. Allowing it however to be so, there is surely nothing in it we ought not to have expected. When we view the enthusiasm they have displayed on every occasion; when we consider their general feeling as a people, and their conviction of the nature of the contest in which they were embarked; that they should give their money, and offer their lives, cannot be astonishing. They were only offering a part to preserve the rest; they were risking their lives for what alone renders existence estimable. To conceive it involuntary is absurd, and is contradicted by their uniform conduct in the field, by our total want of intelligence, by their conduct when prisoners, by every practical instance that can be adduced.

Q

sured

sured success at Quesnoy and on the Rhine; an idea that cannot require much refutation: for I should humbly conceive no person, but a blind and implicit adherer even to the folly of Ministers, will be found absurd enough to assert it to be a military principle, or even a position that common sense can endure, that, instead of acting on one point in one large body, and against one given object, with nearly a certainty of success, it is wise by dividing our force to attempt two, and to secure the success of one by the calamities of defeat in the other. Yet such was precisely our conduct. Acting in one firm body, as at Valenciennes, against either Quesnoy or Dunkirk, the success of the allies must have been morally certain; acting against both it became obviously doubtful. The rash, nay desperate, attempt was made; the hopes of the campaign were completely blasted; and when the intemperance of the times will again allow calm reason to take her natural sway, mankind at large will join in pitying the ignorance, and despising the folly, of that Administration which could

for

for a moment adopt as a plan, against the most powerful military nation in the universe, the generally dangerous and commonly ruinous expedient of acting by detachment in separate corps*.

But let us now trace their conduct in the South, where Toulon, having in common with almost every other large mercantile and sea-port town relisted the power and deprecated the principles of Robespierre and his faction, and having witnessed the dreadful example made of other cities, at length resolved to seek for succour and protection even in the arms of their enemies. They had entered into a treaty with Lord Hood,

* It has been generally imagined this plan originated with the Lord Chancellor, whose deep legal knowledge must be presumed from his situation, but of whose military talents doubts may be fairly entertained. I cannot help regretting, however, that he did not upon this occasion apply to our army abroad, what he must have been well acquainted with, the governing principle of his politics at home; for, if in the division of their opponents Ministers have ever found the source of their own power, he might have naturally concluded, that in the division of our army he was laying the foundation of the power and victories of the French.

which put him in possession of the place; and the French fleet in the Mediterranean, that had so long swept the coasts of Italy, had by the same agreement fallen into his hands. That the Ministers here could have no previous conception of the possibility of such an event happening, is distinctly seen from the circumstance of the equipment of the fleet, in which no military officer of any rank was to be found. Their conduct is therefore only to be considered in the consequent steps they adopted after they had heard of the cession of that important place, and this, *in a military point of view*, resolves itself into a very small compass indeed.—The only question that could arise, was, whether it ought to be defended or evacuated; and this must evidently have depended upon whether they could furnish the means of an adequate defence.

The melancholy events that subsequently occurred there, explained at once to us their system of acting; and the consideration of the force they might have applied to the defence

fence of that town will evidently shew the folly of their conduct. The defence was instantly decided on, and the means they looked to apparently such as they could draw from Gibraltar, from Italy, or from Spain; for though the usual alertness in Government was immediately displayed in creating appointments and wasting public treasure, yet not a single regiment of British infantry was sent from England for the protection of the place. The want of men was here however held out as an apology; and certainly it is a valid one, if true. But the want of men, though substantial after they had determined to defend it, ought to have come into the original scale of consideration in deciding upon attempting the defence. Of men, and good men however, there was in reality no want. The army which has since rendered such essential service to their country under Sir Charles Grey, and which now unfortunately lives but in the memory of its victors, was ready to act and at hand. To defend this new acquisition in the Mediterranean, they would not at the time give up a project,

ed

ed scheme of conquest in the West Indies; and though to the plan of invading France, where they had then no footing, they at last sacrificed this last enterprise, still they would not send a man to Toulon, notwithstanding our faith was pledged to its support, and every tie of policy and honour alike called upon us to defend it vigorously, or to evacuate it totally.

In choosing a middle line, they shewed a want of energy in their military capacity, a want of all regard to faith in their political. In the motley confusion of their mixed garrison the fate of the place soon became obvious; the loss of it was a natural consequence of their measures; and the inadequacy and feebleness of the conduct of Ministers, is the only point that ought to excite the astonishment of the public on the occasion.

Here again it is obvious how much they under-rated the character and situation of their enemy; a fact still further illustrated by

by the unaccountable folly of 2000 men having attempted the capture of Martinico in the West Indies—an undertaking that met with the fate its original rashness richly merited.

Such was the conduct of our Ministers in the first campaign; failure uniformly attended all their measures, disaster pursued every step they adopted; and though few could be found of their most sanguine adherents to defend their past conduct, still most looked forward in hopes that the experience they had acquired would serve as a wholesome lesson in future; and that past errors would have so far proved useful, as to have obviated the possibility in times to come of similar principles occasioning similar disasters.

The present campaign then here comes under consideration; and fortunate it would indeed be for the country, could we anywhere observe the happy effects of dear-bought experience; or could we any how trace in providence, foresight, vigour, and energy,

energy, the just return for that unlimited confidence reposed in Government by the nation at large. The history of this year, as far as relates to the war in Europe, is of a nature far too melancholy to be much or long dwelt on. It is a tale of disasters unparalleled in history—it is an accumulation of misfortune beyond the precedent of former days. In this investigation only one point appears to implicate the conduct and character of Ministers; with the late events they could have no immediate interference; these were but military exertions to ward off impending ruin; and, from the capture of Ypres to the present hour, the history of the campaign is but the journal of a flight.

Previous however to the surrender of that place, it becomes a most serious matter of discussion, how far the Ministers afforded that aid it was their duty to have furnished to the allied army; and whether it was not in their power to have prevented much of

the subsequent disaster, by early and vigorous measures.

The position occupied by the French at Menin and Courtray, at the very opening of the campaign, at once presented a formidable bar to the possibility of carrying on offensive operations till these places were retaken. They were accordingly attacked, but without success. The French in return endeavoured to turn the position of the Allies at Tournay; and though they failed to the extent of their expectation, yet the impression they left that day in the minds of their opponents, was of a nature not easily to be effaced *. In this situation of things then, it was obvious, though the necessity of the service was imminent, that the chance of success was infinitely doubtful with the force then in the field. To strengthen that army, I must presume, was therefore the

* The account given by some of the oldest officers in the Austrian service describes this action as exceeding in fury, obstinacy, and weight of fire, any they had ever known in the whole course of their service against the late King of Prussia.

duty

duty of Ministers—to strengthen it ere repeated defeat and disaster had rendered even every possible reinforcement but an increased and sure prey to the superiority of the enemy. Had Lord Moira's army been sent to reinforce Clairfayt previous to his repeated defeats, the relieving of Ypres might have been possibly effected: by postponing the sending that corps till the first and great issue before that place was completely decided; they rendered it of no real use. Let me not here be understood positively to state, that reinforcing General Clairfayt with Earl Moira's corps would have enabled him to force the covering army at Ypres. This is a military point, resting on documents and knowledge I cannot be supposed to possess: all I mean to say is, that in point of common sense, if that army was ever to serve on the northern frontier, it ought to have been sent with a view to prevent, and not with a certainty of sharing disaster. As it was, its orders were indeed singular. No view of assisting General

General Clairfayt, no wish to give aid to the Duke of York, no idea of succouring the army, led it to Flanders; but the orders of Ministers to the commander restricted him to the defence of Ostend—a place notoriously untenable by a garrison, to be defended only by an army in the field. Happily however for our cause, the excellent officer to whom this corps was trusted, by acting from the pressure of the moment, preserved to England a gallant body of troops, now forming part of the army which has of late been retreating from post to post in Holland, at the fiat of General Pichegru; exhibiting on the one hand the ultimate effects of the original military inefficiency of the Ministers, and on the other the deplorable depth of calamity into which a nation may be plunged, when led to support measures adopted not from a matured and well digested consideration of means and force, but from opinions resting on the basis of presumptuous ignorance, generated not by wisdom and providence, but arising

arising out of folly, vanity, and want of foresight*.

Where or how this will end, it is not for me to decide; let it be determined by those who in the capture of the Low Countries, previous to our embarking in the war, saw the destruction of Great Britain; who in the ruin of the Bank of Amsterdam saw the fate of the Bank of England †.

There are now but few other military points which remain to be noticed. The fate of Lord Moira's army has already been

* It has been much the fashion to introduce the chance of war as an apology for our situation and a screen to our Ministers. In a narrow scale of military operation it may at times be with propriety urged, but in the extended experience of two years it neither can nor ought to be admitted into our consideration. Those too who urge it will do well to remember, that this chance of war, if so applied, is the greatest of all equalizers; it levels all distinctions of character and merit; it applies equally to success and disasters; it alike accounts for the glories of Lord Chatham's administration, and the disgrace of our arms in the present.

† The language held by Mr. Burke and his associates to urge us on to war,

stated.

stated. It is not improbable it was originally assembled, more with an intention to amuse the public mind, than from any serious plan of its ever being employed. From the gallantry of the troops, much; and from the character and talents of the commander, every thing was fairly to be expected: but it remains for the ingenuity of the present Government to explain the grounds on which for six months that corps remained perfectly inactive; we being in complete possession of the sea, and Ministers daily vaunting (with what truth is of little consequence) the certainty of internal convulsion in France.

In the expedition to the West Indies, successful as it has fortunately proved, we may again trace the steadiness with which they have constantly adhered to their fatal principles. It originally consisted of ten thousand men: when it failed it had been reduced to half that number. With this inadequate force however, the ability, the enterprising spirit and indefatigable activity of

Sir

Sir Charles Grey effected the whole of the object; he put us in possession of all the French West India Islands: but in this situation, though they acknowledged the importance of the conquest, they had neither foresight to discern the probability, nor energy to counteract the possibility, of France attempting to repossess herself of those important islands. A handful of men got easy repossession of the greatest part of Guadalupe [¶]. Instead of being reinforced from home, our Commander in Chief saw himself completely forgotten; and at a period when it was necessary to act with vigour, he found himself charged with the defence of all our possessions, with a force notoriously insufficient for the safety of one of the islands.

In the Mediterranean we have indeed, at the expence of maintaining for months on that service a squadron that might other-

* It is upon no light or trivial authority I think I can assert that Ministers had intelligence of this expedition soon after its sailing from France, though no steps were taken in consequence.

wife

wise have been more usefully employed, added the kingdom of Corsica to the Crown of Great Britain: but how far the military provision of Ministers was adequate to the attempt, is to be ascertained by the conduct of the Commander in Chief*. To the gallantry of our officers and men we here, as on many other occasions, owe much; to the providence and foresight of the Ministers, nothing.

In their management of the navy it is unnecessary for my purpose to trace much of their conduct: it explains itself, and demonstrates its proceeding from the same principles which have actuated them throughout. Here even the indolence of office could not communicate inactivity to our gallant officers and brave seamen. Where they have been enabled to act, thank God! they have yet succeeded, and have fortunately for us

* General Dundas is supposed to have resigned the command in consequence of a dispute with Lord Hood, who, when he subsequently applied to the acting commander for military force, was refused, on the ground of the inadequacy of his numbers.

still maintained British superiority on its favourite element. It has not been their fault, if our trade has met with an inadequate protection. To them the blame cannot be attributed, that (in sight of our own coast, under the eye of the Minister when at the residence attached to the office he has obtained from a confiding and deluded country) no ship was to be found to keep French gun-boats within the harbour of Dunkirk. That no naval protection was afforded to either our American or East India possessions, lies not at their door. That all the French fleets have arrived with safety in their own ports; that they have been supplied with salt-petre from India, corn from America, and naval stores from the Baltic, cannot be charged against our officers and seamen.

That Lord Howe was under the necessity of engaging an enemy superior in numbers, by which the French American fleet got safely into Brest, was not the fault of this gallant officer. His was indeed the well-
earned

earned merit of the victory; he needs not the aid of external decoration to make him the admiration of every Englishman. But it remains for the Minister to give a satisfactory account to the public how these things have happened; to inform us why a number of English vessels, which it is considerably within bounds to state as amounting to upwards of 800, are now riding in French ports; how it comes that upwards of 12,000 British seamen are now groaning in French gaols; and how it happens, that at this moment the French are providing for the ensuing naval campaign with stores captured from Great Britain.

I have now, as shortly as the nature of the subject would admit, endeavoured to shew the destructive and erroneous policy that has influenced the military conduct of Ministers: a line still more completely to be ascertained by a concise view of their conduct to neutral nations; not as it regards its justice or iniquity, but as it tends to elucidate the true principles on which they

R have

have acted. It would be foreign to my present purpose, wishing only to form an accurate idea of the future confidence which ought to be extended to Ministers in the hour of calamity, by a reference to their past, to enter into a discussion on any general principle of their policy: indeed it would not only be unnecessary, but impossible. No principle to which we may refer can for a moment be supposed to have influenced them, because every different measure the ingenuity of man could have adopted has by them at various periods been used.

Let us look round the Powers of the civilised world, and there cannot be found, from those of the greatest importance in the general scale to those of the least consequence, a single State that has not since the beginning of the contest been insulted by insolent and dictatorial mandates in the hour of supposed superiority, and which subsequently has not had an opportunity of thoroughly understanding the character of Administration, by the change of language they have

have in the moment of calamity adopted. Not satisfied with aiming at the demolition of the government of France, they struck at the freedom of action of every independent and neutral State in Europe. If France has attempted to disseminate in any public manner her Jacobin principles, they have in a more striking mode endeavoured to maintain doctrines relative to neutral powers, the most arbitrary that ever disgraced the annals of tyranny; they have gone beyond even the junto of tyrants with whom they have been acting; and, to the astonishment of the world, we have seen British ambassadors outstripping in violence the agents of despotism.

On examining the conduct of France in the year 1792, we may find much to blame in their treatment of the Italian Powers. Their fleet commanded the Mediterranean, and their measures originated from the unprincipled use they made of that superiority. Their insulting mandates were conveyed to the King of Naples by a grenadier, and

necessity forced him to acquiesce in their wishes. In the ensuing year the British fleet obtained similar possession of that sea, and the very reprobated conduct of the French became the example we followed. The Grand Duke of Tuscany was insulted, and the tyrannical exertion of superior force compelled him to submit. The republic of Genoa, because weak, was oppressed ; the laws of neutral nations were totally disregarded ; the consequence of our power was the certainty of oppression. In the North our conduct has been dictated by similar motives ; with this single difference, that, in proportion to the superior power of the Northern Courts, our commands have been put in a lower tone : but the spirit is the same, our system of acting exactly similar.

If we look to America, a uniformity of conduct will appear ; and though every well-wisher to his country must join with me in sincerely hoping the existing differences with that Continent may be happily accommodated, yet I may venture to assert, with-
out

out contradiction, that desirable event must be the produce of American moderation, and not of British justice or equity*.

* If the conduct of France at Naples was unjustifiable, what shall we say to an Ambassador of Great Britain at the Court of Tuscany (acting of course only up to his orders) insulting the Grand Duke, by stating in a memorial to all the foreign Ministers, bearing date May 23, 1793, "that the measures taken with regard to the French nation solely and entirely originated from the instigations and councils of a single person, whose ascendancy and power over the mind of his Royal Highness could not from his tenderest infancy to the present moment, be eradicated." And subsequently on the 5th of October, "The undersigned is obliged to declare, in order that his Royal Highness the Grand Duke may be informed of it, that Admiral Lord Hood has ordered an English squadron, in conjunction with a detachment from the Spanish fleet, to set sail for Leghorn, there to act according to the part which his Royal Highness may take. The unjust and notorious partiality of Tuscany in favour of the French, and the vast seizure of corn and effects belonging to merchants of Toulon at Leghorn, at a time when the armies of their Britannic and Spanish Majesties had occasion for the same articles, evidently prove the injury which ensues from such a neutrality for the operations of the Allies. In consequence Admiral Lord Hood declares, in the name of the King his master, that if within the space of twelve hours after the representations of the undersigned, his Royal Highness the Grand Duke does not resolve to send away M. de la Flotte and his adherents from Tuscany, the squadron will act offensively against the port and city of Leghorn.

" The

The character of those who have thus managed the interests of their country displays itself in their conduct in a stronger way than I shall venture to state it; but when we attend farther to dates, and find we ascertain the hour of violence and oppression by a reference to our success or failure, where can a doubt remain that their judgment has all along been formed by a false criterion, their measures directed by an erroneous policy?

Nay, even to those of the French for whom they were fighting they have ex-

“ The unhappy consequences of this proceeding can alone
“ be imputed to those who have had the audacity to give per-
“ fidious advice, and to make false representations upon the
“ present state of affairs—they alone will have to answer for
“ all that may happen henceforward.”

The papers in respect to Genoa and the North are too voluminous to be here inserted; they are however exactly of a similar nature. Sweden and Denmark have at length emancipated themselves from our violence by a serious armament; and America, after having borne (with a degree of patience exhibited only in a climate where the purest patriotism reigns, and the immortal Washington governs) all our tyrannical proceedings, has insisted at length upon an unequivocal explanation of points that both for the honour and interest of this country ought long ago to have been settled.

tended

tended the full conviction of their baneful measures. They never could see expeditions aimed at their foreign possessions, without observing, on the one hand, an application of our force completely foreign from the avowed purpose of the war, and originating from a mistaken idea of the resources of France; and, on the other, a treacherous design of dismembering and ruining what Ministers affected to support. If the sending an army to the West Indies weakened the force you could apply at home against France, the taking possession of those islands gave still greater strength to the rulers at Paris. If, to join the kingdom of Corsica to the Crown of Great Britain, considerable force was similarly misapplied, the very conquest of that island has confirmed the revolutionary government in France.

We have betrayed even the interests of our friends; and the Emigrants must view with disgust, while the Jacobins contemplate with joy, the iniquity of our proceedings.—In short, the policy of Pilnitz has universal-

ly

ly been ours : the *fides Punica* is the faith of our ministers.—We have conducted ourselves on a false opinion of our strength, and of French weakness; we have aimed at private advantage more than general good; we have ruined only our friends, and have added to the strength and energy of our enemy. The consequence of all this, however unfortunate, is but perfectly natural; and as we now see the original crusaders hiding their diminished heads in their German possessions, so are we with our allies, the Dutch, left almost singly in the contest; striking examples of the truth of that approved maxim—That in unprincipled pursuits there can be no concert; between Powers pursuing such ends there can be no confidence*.

From

* The authenticity of the following letter, I am well aware, from the nature of its contents, and the high authority it gives to the military doctrines I have stated, will be attempted to be held out as a fiction. It must easily, however, occur to every considerate person, that great impropriety might attend my disclosing the channel through which it fell into my hands. This I must therefore decline doing; but I may with safety affirm, from a variety of circumstances, that

From this retrospect of the conduct of
the present Administration; from judging
by

that I have every reason to suppose it genuine that a man can
have.

The original is in French; and, in the translation, lan-
guage is a good deal sacrificed to precision.

Copy of a Letter from the DUKE of BRUNSWICK to the
KING of PRUSSIA.

" The motives, Sire, which make me desire my recall,
" from the army are founded upon the unhappy experience,
" that the want of connection, the distrust, the egotism, the
" spirit of cabal, have disconcerted the measures adopted
" during the two last campaigns, and still disconcert the
" measures taken by the Combined Armies. Oppressed by
" the misfortune of being involved, by the errors of others,
" in the unfortunate situation wherein I find myself, I feel
" very sensibly that the world judges of military characters
" by their successes, without examining causes. Raising
" the siege or the blockade of Landau, will make an epoch
" in the history of this unfortunate war; and I have the
" misfortune of being implicated in it. The reproach will
" fall upon me, and the innocent will be confounded with
" the guilty. Notwithstanding all misfortunes, I would not
" have given way to my inclination of laying at your Majesty's
" feet my desire of relinquishing a career which has been
" the principal study of my life: but when one has lost one's
" trouble, one's labour and efforts; when the objects of the
" campaign are lost, and there is no hope that a third cam-
" paign may offer a more favourable issue, what part re-
" mains

by the surest of all criterions, the experience of the past; thinking as I do of the motives

" mains to be taken by the man the most attached to, the
 " most zealous for, your Majesty's interests and your cause,
 " but that of avoiding further disasters? The same reasons
 " now divide the Powers which have hitherto divided them:
 " The movements of the armies will suffer from it, as they
 " have hitherto done: Their motions will be retarded and
 " embarrassed, and the delay of re-establishing the Prussian
 " army, politically necessary, will become perhaps the source
 " of a train of misfortunes for next campaign, the conse-
 " quences of which are not to be calculated. It is not war
 " which I object to: It is not war which I wish to avoid;
 " but it is dishonour which I fear in my situation, where the
 " faults of other Generals would fall upon me, and where I
 " could neither act according to my principles, nor accord-
 " ing to my prospects. Your Majesty will perhaps remem-
 " ber what I had the honour to represent to you the day you
 " quitted Escheveiler: I exposed all my embarrassments,
 " my troubles and my misfortunes; I exerted all my efforts
 " to prevent any inconveniency: Unfortunately the event
 " has proved the insufficiency thereof; it is therefore only
 " the intimate persuasion I have of the impossibility I am in
 " to effect what is right, which dictates to me the measure
 " of requesting your Majesty to appoint a successor to me
 " as soon as possible. This measure, however afflicting to
 " me, is nevertheless a consequence of those sorrowful re-
 " flections I have made upon my situation. Prudence re-
 " quires I should retire, and honour advises it. *When a*
" great nation like that of France is conducted by the terror
" of punishments, and by enthusiasm, an unanimous sentiment,
" and the same principle, ought to prevail in the measures of
 " the

motives that have influenced them, it would be to betray my duty, and violate the trust reposed in me, were I, in any situation to which either their past or present infatuation may drive the country, to give to them that confidence which ought, I am ready to grant, to be extended to Government in the closing scenes of this deplorable tragedy. To act unanimously, may, from the nature of our situation, be desirable; but to act with those whose conduct is best explained by the necessity of that situation, is completely impossible. In the same line of opposition I have hitherto adopted I must still continue—It is a line that may not have met

"the coalesced Powers. But when, instead thereof, each army acts separately and alone of its own accord, without any fixed plan, without unanimity, and without principles, the consequences are such as we have seen at Dunkirk, at raising the blockade of Maubeuge, at the storming of Lyons, at the destruction of Toulon, and at the raising of the blockade of Landau. Heaven preserve your Majesty from great misfortunes! but every thing is to be feared, if confidence, harmony, uniformity of sentiment, of principles, and of actions, do not take place of the opposite sentiments which have been the source of all misfortunes for two years past. My best wishes always attend your Majesty, and your glory will be my happiness."

"Oppenheim, Jan. 6, 1794."

with

with your approbation, because your view of the subject may have been different; but it is at least one, which in my mode of considering it I have conscientiously followed, to which I must invariably adhere, and to which too I am led by a comparative view of the enlarged policy and enlightened understanding of that person who originally stepped forward, in defiance of calumny, and in despite of temporary unpopularity, to save his country from this mass of calamity. It would ill become me, who consider the friendship of Mr. Fox as the honour of my private life, and a steady adherence to his political principles to be the sole merit of my public character, to state to you what might be conceived to arise from personal predilection, or a partial political opinion. I feel no hesitation however in referring it to your own wisdom to decide, in calling upon every individual, from the prince to the peasant, to determine, after a due consideration of the respective conduct of the present Ministry, and of that great statesman, whether the talents requisite to save the country are to be found in the enlightened wisdom,

wisdom, in the capacious mind and the prophetic spirit of Mr. Fox, or in the miserable policy, the time-serving expedients and wretched subterfuges of the present Cabinet.

I have now endeavoured to lay before you the sources of my political action at an æra that may truly be said to be not only big with the fate of this country but of the civilized world. I have attempted to explain the grounds on which the Revolution in France happened; to establish that the deadly malady of funding was the disorder, an annual deficit of nearly three millions the complaint; and that in the dissolution of the patient an awful and tremendous lesson to surrounding kingdoms is given; a convincing proof that in public communities, as in individual instances, “the paths of glory lead but to the grave.” I have attempted to point out to you, that the various component parts of the old regime in France naturally led by progressive steps to the situation in which they now stand; and a reference to the past experience of history, a knowledge

a knowledge of the sufferings they at present endure, might not improbably lead us to conjecture, that independent of our interference a revolution may happen, when individual security will be established, and property duly protected.

It has been my wish to repel the libellous insinuation of the probability of a similar revolution happening in this country. Unless the oppression of the government be as great, and our financial resources as exhausted, the position is absurd. I have endeavoured to shew, that no wise policy led us to depart from our original system of neutrality, that private intrigue occasioned it, and that public calamity has attended it. I have attempted to explain the evils attending the schism artfully created in the Whig party, and endeavoured to establish the im-
policy of in future confiding in Ministers, by a reference to their past conduct.

One subject I have however carefully avoided entering on. The management of the interior policy at home forms indeed a striking

striking feature in the history of the present day. We have seen the mild practice of the British law departed from; obsolete statutes resorted to for temporary purposes; and temporary constructions attempted to be given to known and defined laws; much of the friendly intercourse and relation that subsisted between the wealthy and the indigent (the best cement to the stability of our constitution) broken down; the sympathetic spirit of confidence and affection that reigned in the breasts of all, annihilated. A system of *espionage** has spread abroad a universal feeling of jealousy and doubt: the assertion of conspiracy has divided and disjointed the best energies of our country. The character of the nation has been calumniated, the spirit of the people belied and blasphemed. On this however at the present moment it might be improper to dwell. The impending trials will determine much. Thank God! the lives of our

* It is most singular, that to describe the system of the present day, we are obliged to have recourse to a French term. To such a system Englishmen have been so little accustomed, that there is not even a word in their language to convey the idea.

countrymen,

countrymen, and our best interests, are finally to be confided to the solid judgment and impartial decision of an English Jury.

I have now completed my original intention : and if I have defeated the calumnious insinuations that have been thrown out ; if I have shewn plainly and intelligibly the principles I have acted upon, my object is effected. If my language has been strong, it appears to me to suit the nature of the times. I entertain no personal animosity against any man ; political conduct is the only source of my attack. I look not for applause, neither do I apprehend censure ; for I know my purpose to be honest, and the execution must necessarily be such as might reasonably be expected from one who has now certainly for the first time, most probably for the last, endeavoured to attract the attention of his constituents or his countrymen.

London,
Nov. 1st, 1794.

F I N I S.